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President Herzog to visit next month

BONN (J.T.) — German President Roman Herzog will pay a two-day state visit to Jordan in November as part of a regional tour which will take him to Israel and the Palestinian self-rule areas. The Associated Press said Herzog will start his tour by visiting Israel where he will receive an honorary doctoral degree from Ben Gurion University on Nov. 16. The president's office said Herzog plans to meet Palestinian President Yasser Arafat the next day, before visiting Jordan. Herzog's five-year term expires in May, and he has indicated he will not run for re-election by parliament. Nominally above politics, the German president is considered the nation's conscience.

Man killed in car bombing in south Lebanon

TYRE (AP) — A motorist was killed Friday when a bomb exploded in his car in southern Lebanon, security officials said. Ali Alawiyeh, 52, was killed instantly when the bomb, weighing about three kilogrammes, exploded at 8 p.m. (17:00 GMT) as he was driving through the village of Qulalieh, 18 kilometres south of the port of Tyre, the officials said, speaking on customary condition of *anonymity. It was not known whether the bomb was* intended to kill Alawiyeh or whether he was on a mission to kill somebody else. Villagers said Alawiyeh, a scrap-metal dealer in Qulalieh, did not belong to any militia or political party. Car bombings are rare in south Lebanon, unlike roadside bombs, which Hizbollah guerrillas have often detonated under vehicles of the Israeli army and their allied Lebanese militia in the Israeli-occupied zone.

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Mideast peace talks resume

'Clinton said to give Israeli, Palestinian leaders a Tuesday deadline to reach a new peace accord'

WYE MILLS (R) — Israeli and Palestinian negotiators began a second day of high-stake peace talks at a secluded estate in Maryland Friday under the watchful and impatient eye of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

A senior Palestinian official said the negotiators, led by Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, made no headway Thursday despite the presence of U.S. President Bill Clinton.

Clinton urged them to tie up all loose ends, staying at the estate if necessary until Tuesday, the official said.

The U.S. president has brought the Middle East leaders together at Wye Plantation on the eastern shore of the Chesapeake Bay in the hope that long and intensive talks *out of the public eye will* break a 19-month deadlock.

The target is an agreement on Israeli withdrawal from 13 per cent of the West Bank, coupled with security steps by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) to protect Israelis from attack.

"There's no progress on any of the issues so far," the Palestinian official, who declined to be identified, said.

Albright, who is overseeing the talks, was expected to hold a three-way meeting later in the day with Netanyahu and Arafat, Israeli sources said.

Clinton told the delegations they might think about adding two days to their stay at the plantation, the Palestinian official said. The United States had said talks would probably end Sunday.

The president also told them it would be a failure if the Israelis and Palestinians did not agree on the whole agenda, which includes a range of disputes left over from previous stages of a peace process that started in 1993, he added.

"President Clinton gave us and the Israelis an ultimatum until Tuesday ... He said there should be no fragmentation, that by Tuesday there should be complete success or failure.

"There should be no issues delayed or moved to other phases," the Palestinian official said.

Israeli delegates declined to comment on this Palestinian account, citing an agreement not to leak substance to the media. But if leaks start, the Israelis may have to reciprocate, one Israeli source said.

Friday morning the delegations broke up into groups specialising in security, economic issues, an airport in Gaza and setting up a safe passage for Palestinians between Gaza and the West Bank, Israeli delegation sources said.

The three were probably to have lunch together at Netanyahu's quarters at River House, a few hundred yards (metres) from Houghton House, the Georgian-style country house where Arafat and his team are staying, the sources said.

Clinton kicked off the conference Thursday with a brief public speech admonishing the negotiators to end the stalemate and make strides toward peace.

"There is hard work ahead if we are to reach an agreement," Clinton told the opening session.

He earlier urged them to "break the logjam" in the peace process. "Too much time has already been lost," he said.

Clinton then had five meetings with Arafat and Netanyahu, either separately or together, and committees worked late into the evening, Palestinian spokesman Marwan Kanafani said.

The three leaders shared dinner before the president headed home to Washington around midnight (0400 GMT).

Thursday night a U.S. spokesman said the talks opened in a "constructive and pragmatic atmosphere," although only a few hours had passed before negotiators reported the first heated exchange over the particularly thorny issue of security.

But *Palestinian negotiators* said officials meeting to discuss security issues abruptly ended their talks Thursday evening after a heated exchange, which they said was sparked by a "provocative" comment by an Israeli official.

Israeli Commerce and Industry Minister Natan Sharansky *joined the Israeli* delegation Friday morning, delegation sources said.

New Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon and Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai will join by Sunday.

According to a poll published in Israel Friday, most Israelis want the summit to produce a deal (see story on page 12).

Peres, Moratinos optimistic

FORMER ISRAELI Prime Minister Shimon Peres said on Friday he believed there was "more than a fair chance" a peace deal would be clinched at the Middle East summit under way in the United States.

"I think if nothing unexpected will happen, there will be an agreement. The three parties, each of them, may have different reasons to reach an agreement but the conclusion is the same," he told Reuters.

"I think there is more than a fair chance they will reach an agreement," said Peres, who as Israel's foreign minister received the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize along with the late Israeli leader Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

In Nicosia, the European Union's (EU) special envoy for the Middle East said he was moderately optimistic about the chances of a breakthrough at the summit.

"If there are some good dynamics in the talks, I believe we can reach an accord, which has been hoped for and supported by the European Union since the U.S. initiative was launched," Miguel Angel Moratinos told AFP.

"If there is an agreement, it will be a comprehensive accord," he said.

Moratinos, who is based in Nicosia, said he would be going to Washington on Saturday to push the EU's role in the summit at Wye Plantation in Maryland.

"During my stay in Washington, I will try, if the parties ask me, to help facilitate the conclusion of an accord," he told AFP.

His Majesty King Hussein on Friday receives Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon and Mrs. Sharon at the Mayo Clinic

King closely following progress of Wye talks

King receives Sharon, exchanges views with Arafat, Albright, Blair and Mubarak

Agencies

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein was following closely the latest developments in the crucial Palestinian-Israeli peace talks launched on Thursday in Wye Plantation, Maryland, by U.S. President Bill Clinton in Wye Mills, Maryland.

On Friday, His Majesty telephoned Palestinian President Yasser Arafat who briefed him *on the progress of the talks.*

The Palestinian president was scheduled to visit the King, who is receiving treatment at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota, on Wednesday upon his arrival in the U.S. after stopping in London. The visit was postponed till Saturday morning.

But at a request from U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who telephone the King earlier, His Majesty asked the Palestinian president to postpone the visit to a later time to maintain the momentum of the peace talks.

Albright briefed King Hussein on the latest developments in the talks.

Also Friday, King Hussein received Israeli Foreign Minister *Ariel Sharon who wished* His Majesty a speedy recovery and safe return home.

King Hussein asked the Israeli minister to help reach the final status negotiations *and put the peace process back* on track.

The meeting was attended by Their Royal Highnesses Prince Hamzeh and Princess Haya as well as Mrs. Sharon.

The King also exchanged views on the phone with British Prime Minister Tony Blair on bilateral relations and on the latest developments regarding Palestinian-Israeli talks.

On Thursday, King Hussein and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak exchanged views on the Wye talks and the latest developments in the Syrian-Turkish dispute.

Earlier Thursday, Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh and Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib concluded a visit to Cairo after holding talks with Mubarak and senior Egyptian officials.

Tarawneh briefed the Egyptian leadership on talks last week with Arafat and Netanyahu. He also expressed the Kingdom's "appreciation" of Egypt's efforts to mediate between Syria and Turkey.

Khatib, meanwhile, said that Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa is expected in Amman on Oct. 24 for high-level talks.

Also, the Jordanian-Egyptian Higher Committee will be meeting in Amman November 15-16, to discuss prospects for *establishing a free trade zone* between the two countries, among other issues, Khatib said.

Before leaving Cairo, Tarawneh said he was opti*mistic about the Wye Planta*tion talks between the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and Israel.

"We are optimistic, but cautious because everything depends on the negotiations," Tarawneh said.

"We found the two sides in better moods....we noticed the mood is more positive...We've felt that the Israelis plan to enter (the negotiations) seriously. This time we found there are points of agreement," Tarawneh added.

However, he advised the Palestinians not to dwell on the details at this week's U.S.-*brokered peace summit.*

"The Palestinian side should look at the whole picture and not balk at details. Stopping at small points will lead to the collapse of the process," Tarawneh said, according to Reuters.

On Friday, Tarawneh said in a newspaper interview that Jordan wants security guarantees not only for the Israelis but also for the Palestinians and other peoples because the region requires comprehensive security, including economic and social security.

"We felt through contacts with the Israelis that there is a big chance for the success of the current peace efforts if the security matters are agreed on. It is hoped that the talks on *security matters at the Wye* Plantation summit will succeed," said Tarawneh in an interview published by Al Itihad newspaper in Abu Dhabi.

He reiterated Jordan's readi*ness to offer all possible sup*port for the Palestinians, but not to substitute for them in any negotiations.

(Continued on page 12)

Turkey rejects Syrian call for wide-ranging talks

Agencies

TURKEY ON Friday rejected Syria's offer for talks on wide range of problems, saying instead Syria must end its support to Kurdish rebels.

Syria wants to revive a negotiation mechanism set up in 1992 to deal with a broad range of issues, including how to share water from the Euphrates River. Turkey's strengthening ties with Israel are also a source of tension.

Damascus fears an ambitious Turkish irrigation project will reduce the flow of the Euphrates in Syria and in the disputed border province of Hatay.

The Turkish foreign ministry said Friday the "only issue on Turkey's agenda is the Kurdish rebels."

"We demand that Syria meet fully all our demands," the foreign ministry said in a written statement. "We want to see for certain whether Syria has stopped helping the PKK [Kurdish Labour Party] or not," it said.

Turkey has accused Syria of providing logistical support to rebels of the PKK and of sheltering party leader Abdullah Ocalan either in Syria proper or in the Syrian-controlled Bekaa region of Lebanon.

The row boiled up at the beginning of October when Turkey went so far as to threaten Syria with military reprisals if it failed to heed its warnings to cease all support for the separatists.

On Tuesday, however, Ankara acknowledged that Syria appeared to have closed down PKK camps and was probably no longer sheltering Ocalan, Turkish Defence Minister Ismet Sezgin said.

But Turkish officials later said this was Syria's claim and was not confirmed officially.

In a related development, Ocalan said he was the object of an assassination attempt by the Turkish secret service in Syria last week.

"The Turkish secret service used some people whom I trusted. Those people told me to be at a specific location on Oct. 9," Ocalan told the pro-Kurdish television channel Med-TV, broadcasting from Europe and monitored in this southeastern city late Thursday.

"But suspecting the situation I decided not to go there at the last minute and I was flying when the blasts took place at that specific location," Ocalan said in the telephone interview with Med-TV.

"I survived an apparent assassination attempt," he said, declining to specify where he currently was.

Turkish press reports said last weekend *that a series of blasts* rocked several places in Syria on Oct. 9. They suggested that Syrian opposition groups or the Turkish secret service could be behind the explosions.

Jewish settlers block West Bank highway

RAMALLAH (AP) — Angry Jewish settlers blocked the West Bank's north-south highway Friday and others burned tires after complaining that Palestinian police had detained, beaten and fired on *two of their security officers.*

Palestinian security officials confirmed the two settler guards were briefly held, but denied they were roughed up.

In Friday's protest, about 100 settlers, including children, laid an electricity pole across the highway to block traffic.

Settlers sat on the pole and on boulders on the side of the road, reading from the Torah. Israeli troops directed motorists to an alternate route to avoid a traffic jam.

After about an hour, the protesters dispersed.

Later Friday some 50 settlers staged a protest on the road outside of the West Bank settlement of Ofra near Ramallah, burning tires and briefly blocking traffic, police spokesman Ofer Sivan said.

The confrontation began Thursday evening when the security chief for nearby Jewish settlements and his deputy were patrolling the West Bank's north-south highway *after repeated incidents of* rock-throwing by Palestinians, according to a settler statement.

The security officers' car was hit by rocks from a Palestinian car, the statement said. The two Israelis chased the car into the Palestinian-run town of Ramallah, where, they said, the attackers escaped into the residence of Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas.

The settlers said Abbas' guards stopped the Israeli car, pulled out the two security guards, confiscated their weapons and equipment, beat them and fired on them. Later they were taken to the joint Israeli-Palestinian regional office and released.

(Continued on page 12)

Government to present plans on Disi water tapping project

By Ghadeer Taher

AMMAN — Last summer's record high temperatures, accompanied by a water pollution and shortage crisis, has put more heat on the government to find new water supplies before the year 2005 when Jordan's freshwater resources will have run dry.

Whether it will be the pumping of water from one of the oldest underground aquifers in the south, or the costly desalination of sea water, or piped water from Iraq or Turkey, the debt-burdened Kingdom is running out of time as it expediently looks into its limited and very costly options.

An orientation seminar for investors which opens today on a $700 million project to draw the "sweet" water from the Disi basin and pump it to Amman thus takes on greater importance for the water impoverished country.

The project, which is proposed on a build, operate and transfer basis, will entail building a 300-kilometre water pipeline from Disi to Amman to deliver the 30,000-year-old water to the capital by the year 2005. A recent government report issued in July said Jordan will run out of freshwater resources by that time, and there will be no more confirmed water resources within the country's borders to develop.

"This project is not just a good idea, it is a studied one," said Minister of Water and Irrigation and Energy Hani Mulki.

Armed with 80 volumes of studies conducted over the last three decades, drilling data, geo-physical studies, satellite imaging and the largest three dimensional groundwater flow model to run various extraction scenarios, the minister and his team are expected to tell potential bidders that the proposed project is a sure bet.

"Given the current technology, not future technology, we are looking at an annual extraction rate of 100 million cubic metres (mcm) from these wells so as to keep them economically exploitable after 200 years. This is a guarantee," Mulki told the Jordan Times revealing details of what was once a classified study.

The mega-project could also breath some life into a stagnant economy.

"We want this project not only to bring water to Jordan but to also provide an opportunity for economic growth," said Mulki, who will evaluate offers on the final price as well as the "value added" criteria, i.e., how much of the $700 million investment will be spent locally.

"The water is going to be more expensive in absolute terms," he said. "In economic terms, if we create new jobs, new industries, new management skills... etc., then the indirect benefits of the project will far outweigh the increase in the cost of water."

Jordan uses a mere 160 cubic metres per capita per year — one-third of the universally recognised "water poverty line" of 500 cubic metres per capita per year, according to the ministry's report.

"If this project is not implemented, there will be a crisis in Amman within the next 10 years," said the ministry's Assistant Secretary General Hazim Nasser. "We will not be able to satisfy more than 50 per cent of the city's needs," *he said.*

Already around 50 mcm from the Disi water is being used for agriculture by four privately owned farms free of charge under a 1985, 25-year concession agreement granted by the government. Another 14 mcm is extracted from the aquifer, which underlies 80 per cent of Saudi Arabia's territories and 90 per cent of Jordan's, for domestic use for the port city of Aqaba.

Saudi Arabia currently extracts 750 mcm annually, but experts agree that the two countries' extractions, with a 100-kilometre buffer zone, have *negligible effect on each* other.

"If they want to bring the Disi water to Amman, there is one condition," said hydrologist Elias Salameh, a long-*time proponent of using the* sandstone aquifer for domestic use. "Agricultural use in the area must stop. It is either this or that, you cannot have both," he said.

According to Salameh, the aquifer is already over exploited with an annual drop of 80-85 centimetres in the groundwater level, which he describes as a "very dangerous."

By the time the Disi-Amman project is up and running, officials say, the farming concession would have run out, relieving the pressure on what could be the oldest water *in the world*, dating to the end of the last ice age.

But Salameh also worries that the aquifer, which is highly permeable, is being polluted by pesticides, fertilisers and *untreated waste from these* farms, which cover over 50,000 dunums.

Every year Jordan uses about 900 mcm of water, but nature replaces only about 650 mcm.

Of the total, agriculture consumes the lion's share of the resources using between 600-700 mcm annually, while 240 mcm go *to domestic use and* 30-35 mcm for industry.

The shortfall is compensated by taking water from the ground, including non-renewable fossil water thousands of years old.

"We are over exploiting our water resources by 300 mcm annually." Salameh said as he spread out maps and charts in his University of Jordan office. Lines registering water levels at each well showed a relentless decline.

"The collapse will not come at once — one a quifer after another will be destroyed," *Salameh said explaining that* since the mid-1980s until today around 2.5 billion cubic metres have been extracted and not replenished.

Exacerbating the problem of water resources drying up, is the danger posed by increasingly poor water quality.

The quality of Jordan's water is degrading rapidly, *according to Salameh*, who wants irrigation in the highlands to be curbed drastically now rather than later when nature will force conservation.

(Continued on page 12)

Taleban vow to protect but restrain Ben Laden

KANDAHAR (AFP) — Saudi dissident Osama Ben Laden will be allowed to live safely in Afghanistan but he will not be allowed to engage in any activity against any country, a Taleban spokesman said Friday.

"He is a guest and we will not let anybody to take Osama Ben Laden away nor allow Osama to work against any country," Abdul Hae Mutamen, head of Taleban information wing, told AFP in an interview.

Mutmaen rejected allegations Ben Laden was involved in the twin bombings at the U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya in August.

"The U.S. secret agencies pinned the blame on Ben Laden to hide their own failures leading to the missile strikes in Afghanistan on Aug. 20," Mutmaen said.

Mutmaen said a Saudi Arabian delegation visited Kandahar and asked the Taleban to "hand over" Ben Laden.

"We told them Sharia [Islamic law] does not allow us to hand over a guest, so how could we hand over a mujahid [holy warrior] like Osama."

"We told them if ulema [religious scholars] from Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan announce a fatwa [edict] that will be a different story as Muslim ummah [nation] follows a fatwa," Mutmaen said.

Mutmaen's remarks came as a Saudi newspaper quoted Taleban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar as saying he was considering handing over Ben Laden provided religious authorities in Afghanistan approved such a move.

"I am consulting the ulema, who are of course independent, about the Osama Ben Laden affair, to determine whether his handover is legal under religious law or not," Al Sharq Al Awsat newspaper Friday quoted Omar as saying in an interview.

Saudi Arabia, along with Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates, are the only countries to recognise the Taleban as the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan.

But Saudi diplomatic ties with the Taleban broke down in September after the Islamic militia reportedly refused Riyadh's demand to expel Ben Laden.

Mutmaen said Mullah Omar told visiting U.N. Special Envoy Lakhdar Ibrahimi earlier this week that Ben Laden had been told not to make provocative comments such as announcing a holy war against the United States.

Omar informed Ibrahimi that "we have talked it over with Osama and made it clear to him that he would not say things like that in future and he has understood this."

SETTLERS PROTEST AGAINST PALESTINIAN POLICE: **Right-wing Jewish settlers Friday block the main north-south West Bank highway to protest the overnight detention by Palestinian police of two armed settlers who entered the self-rule Palestinian town of Ramallah. The settlers' action came as Israeli and Palestinian leaders are meeting at Wye Plantation near Washington to try and finalise a new interim peace deal (Reuters photo)**

Turkish Islamists support snap poll efforts

ANKARA (R) — Turkey's main opposition Islamists on Friday backed efforts to hold early elections in December and end the weak minority government of Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz.

Struggling for parliamentary support with an economic downturn looming, senior members of Yilmaz's three-way coalition say they want to cut and run to the ballot box.

Conservative Yilmaz and an opposition powerbroker have yet to give the nod for elections, previously set for next spring.

The Islamists, the biggest grouping in parliament, are confident of doing even better than their narrow victory at the last parliamentary vote in 1995 when they emerged as the biggest party with 21 per cent.

"Turkey has been in a state of political chaos for a long time. Elections as soon as possible are the way out of political instability," Abdullah Gul, a deputy head of the Islamist Virtue Party, told a news conference.

A senior MP of Yilmaz's Motherland Party was noncommittal.

"Motherland doesn't say December is possible or not," Ugur Aksoz said. "We will evaluate the subject next week."

Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit urged Yilmaz, his main coalition partner, on Wednesday to call an election soon.

Yilmaz has been bogged down by allegations of links between his wing of the ruling alliance and organised crime.

Ecevit, widely regarded as the country's cleanest mainstream politician, has distanced himself from the scandal.

"You can't make Ecevit a partner in this," the newspaper Hurriyet said in an editorial. "Ecevit can no longer carry this government on his shoulders."

Commentators say Yilmaz may try to hold elections before dire economic predictions become reality and hit voters' pockets. The government admitted this week it could not make its year-end annual inflation target of 50 per cent.

A December vote, though, is by no means a certainty.

Electoral officials say it would be difficult to arrange balloting at such short notice. Leftist powerbroker Deniz Baykal on Friday questioned the plan.

"What's made them so interested in elections all of a sudden? Have they sorted out Syria yet?" Anatolian quoted Baykal as saying.

Kuwait occupation chief defects from Iraq — opposition

LONDON (R) — The head of Iraq's 1990-91 puppet administration in occupied Kuwait has defected from Iraq and been granted asylum in a European country, an Iraqi opposition group said on Friday.

Colonel Alaa Hussein Ali Al Jabour, leader of a so-called Provision Free Government announced following Iraq's invasion, was given refugee status along with his wife and four children in Turkey and later accepted for resettlement in a European country, an Iraqi National Congress (INC) statement said.

Jabour was named prime minister, commander-in-chief and acting minister of defence and the interior to run Kuwait following Iraq's Aug. 2, 1990 invasion and proclamation of Kuwait as Iraq's 19th province.

He was later removed by Iraq and briefly appointed deputy prime minister in Baghdad's post-Gulf war government.

In Sept. 1991, seven months after Kuwait's liberation by a U.S.-led multinational force, Kuwaiti public prosecutor Mohammad Al Bannai was quoted as saying Kuwaiti authorities had dropped cases against all members of the puppet government apart from Jabour.

He described Jabour, then known as Alaa Hussein Al Khaffaji, as an Iraqi agent and said he would be pursued for his crimes during Baghdad's seven-month occupation, the Kuwait News Agency reported in Sept. 1991.

Bannai said the authorities had dropped their cases after concluding that most of those who took part in it were doing so "against their will," the agency said.

'Saudi diplomat in Australia had throat slashed'

CANBERRA (R) — Australian police said on Friday that a Saudi Arabian diplomat murdered in his home in Canberra had his throat brutally slashed.

They said they had not yet established a motive for the Saudi first secretary's killing.

"Let me say this was a brutal crime, the injuries were substantial," assistant police commissioner Bill Stoll said of the murder on Tuesday of 54-year-old Abdullah Al Ghamdi.

"There had been an attack on the deceased's throat area and there were substantial injuries," Stoll said. The time of Al Ghamdi's death has not been pinpointed, but police said he had been dead for several hours before he was discovered by an embassy staff member at about 5 p.m. local time on Tuesday, lying in a pool of blood in his apartment kitchen.

A man was spotted leaving the crime site in the early hours of Tuesday, and police said they were looking for the owner of a burgundy two-door hatchback car, who may have since been behaving erratically or involved in unusual activity.

On the evening of his death, Al Ghamdi had been drinking with a friend. When the pair returned to his apartment in the fashionable suburb of Kingston, Al Ghamdi made two phone calls, after which his friend left, at about 10 p.m. local time.

Local media have reported that Al Ghamdi was a regular in local bars and said he was a lonely man.

Asked if the police were interviewing prostitutes and local brothel owners as part of their investigations, Stoll said they were following up all of Al Ghamdi's possible social contacts.

"[Al Ghamdi] lived a life in Canberra, had a lot of contact with a lot of people, and its a matter of police becoming aware of each and every one of those contacts," he said.

Police were also interested in speaking to Al Ghamdi's girlfriend, identified as Leila.

Al Ghamdi's killing is the first diplomatic murder in Canberra, Australia's political and consular centre.

Four new senior citizens' centres to be set up later this year

Facilities to offer social activities to the elderly during the day

By Suha Ma'ayeh

AMMAN — The government plans to set up four community centres for elderly Jordanians later this year as part of stepped up efforts to care for a growing number of lonely senior citizens.

Unlike their counterparts in Western countries, who are sometimes sent to nursing homes when they become weak, incapacitated or senile, many Jordanians prefer to keep the elderly at home in line with Islamic teachings and strong social ties, officials and sociologists say.

But modern social pressures and needs have accelerated the process and left many elderly people with nowhere to go but one of seven senior citizens' institutions in the country, even though they often suffer from little more than loneliness and lack of affection, they add.

Occupancy rates, they say, remain relatively low at centres run by the state or by NGOs.

Minister of Social Development Mohammad Kheir Mamser told the Jordan Times in a recent interview that only a third of the 450 beds available at the centres were occupied.

"This is a positive sign as it shows that there are strong ties among family members," added Mamser, who heads a new Jordanian higher committee for senior citizens.

Musa Safi, head of the ministry's Social Defence Department, said many Jordanians prefer to keep their old family members at home because of strict social and religious values.

"Our social upbringing and the prevailing 'culture of shame' do not encourage us to put the elderly in old people's homes," Safi explained.

In addition to these factors, many families shun the idea of putting their elders in homes because most lack professional services and care.

Many want the ministry to conduct regular but unannounced inspections of such centres.

But Mamser said the current network of care for the elderly should be widened.

Mamser said the government, together with NGO's, will open four centres soon to offer health care, recreational and entertainment facilities for pensioners during the day.

"They will spend the day at these centres and return home at night," he explained.

Eight similar centres will be set up at a later stage, and all will be staffed by doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, social counsellors and volunteers.

Those who cannot afford enrolment fees will be assisted by the state and charities, while the rest will have to pay for using the centres.

"We need to take care of our senior citizens," Mamser said. "There are those who are already in old people's homes and need improved medical care, those who live with their families and need special care and those who have outstanding personal qualities that should be enhanced."

"A 70-year-old grandfather often feels terribly lonely when members of the family go to work and leave him alone… through these centres, we will be able to fill his time," Mamser said.

The elderly who will join the day centres will be divided into groups according to common interests to enable officers to devise suitable programmes.

"For example, a group of intellectuals such as university professors will be put together," Mamser said.

He also said basic health and recreational facilities offered at senior citizens' homes run by NGO's needed to be upgraded.

The government, limited by tight fiscal policies, spends around JD60,000 annually on care for the elderly at its centres.

Several people living at senior citizens' homes were divided over the quality of their life at these centres.

Um Salem, a 68-year-old grandmother of eight, said she was enjoying life after being admitted to one of the four private centres earlier this year after diabetes started to affect her fragile body.

"When I got sick, I spent some time at the house of my daughter, who has a full-time job and three children," she added. "She used to wake up three times at night to check on me, and in the end I decided to stay at a home because I found it to be the most convenient solution for all," said Um Salem.

"I'm happy here. The staff are nice to me and take good care of me," she added.

In addition to regular visits by a doctor who checks on 11 other women at the centre, "the manager of the centre takes me twice a week to Al Hussein Medical Centre to attend physiotherapy sessions," explained Um Salem.

She said her children visit her on a regular basis.

"When you grow old and sick, you don't wish to become a burden on any member of the family," added her friend.

But a man at another home for the elderly said he was unhappy and felt depressed.

"I wish I could take my life into my own hands and end it," he said, requesting anonymity.

Many families and some officials said senior citizens' home could be an ideal solution for Jordan's elderly, provided that existing institutions upgrade services, offer better health care and ensure an acceptable level of cleanliness.

"This will change people's attitude and encourage many to keep their elderly at these homes," said one official.

Mamser said Jordan would also join world countries in observing the International Senior Citizens' Year in 1999.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION
Tel. 4773111-19
PROGRAMME TWO

15:10 ..Cartoon — Animaniacs
15:30 .....Clowning Around
16:00 .....Drama — Neighbours
16:30 .....Doc. — Pear Pressure
17:00 French Programme — "Faut Pas Rever"
18:00 .....Drama —Wind at My Back (Ep. 7)
19:00 .....Le Journal
19:15 French Programme — Lo'euf de Colomb
19:30 .....News headlines
19:35 .....Murphy Brown
20:00 .....Today's Health
20:30 .....Sirens
21:05 Drama — ABC of Democracy
21:30 .. ..Making Master Pieces
22:00 .....News in English
22:30 .....Feature film — "Lyddie"
23:59 .....Twisted (Ep.4)
00:30 .....End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:19 ..... Fajr
05:36.....(Sunrise) Duha
11:21.....Dhuhr
14:35.....'Asr1
17:06 .....Maghreb
18:23.....'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifieh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811.
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifieh Tel. 5920146
The Uniate Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Fine weather conditions will prevail with temperatures slightly below average. Scattered showers are expected in the northern parts of the Kingdom, skies partly cloudy, and winds northwesterly moderate to active. In Aqaba, it will be moderate, winds northerly moderate to active, and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman 14/25
Aqaba 21/32
Deserts 11/28
Jordan Valley 21/31

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 25 Aqaba 32. Humidity readings: Amman 53 per cent, Aqaba 45 per cent.

Following are the highest temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun 25
Jerash 31
Um Qays.....29
Madaba.....28
Petra 30
Dead Sea 36

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Khalid Abdo 4657129
Dr. Bassam Karadsheh ...4389200
Dr. Fakhri Tayeh.....4915880
Dr. Ramzi Mazzawi 4894788
Firas pharmacy 5661912
Al Asema pharmacy....4637055
Nairoukh pharmacy ...4623672
Al Salam pharmacy ...4636730
Yacoub pharmacy 4644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 4637660
Najib pharmacy 53477632
IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'ameh.....250080
Al Quds pharmacy .....(—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Isma'il Tallawi.....903469
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre.....4637111
Civil Defence Department .5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency.....199
Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade.....4617101
Blood Bank.....4775121
Highway Police.....5343402
Traffic Police.....4896390
Public Security Dept.....4630321
Hotel Complaints.....5605800
Price Complaints.....5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints 4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs.....5661101
Jordan Television 4773111
Radio Jordan 4774111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority .5815615
Electric Power Co..... 4636381
RJ Flight Information..44-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport ..44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic, Abdli 5666131/7
Hussein Medical Centre Tel. 5856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khalidi Maternity.....4644281/6
Akileh Maternity.....4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman. 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5669131
University Hospital 5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4777101/3
Al-Bashir.....4775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5602240/50
Amal Hospital 5674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital .....(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital .....(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital..... (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital .....(09)990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital .....(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital .....(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital .....(02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights is obtained on telephone (44) 52700 or (44) 523250.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:10 .....Tehran (RJ)
07:30 .....Damascus (RJ)
08:45 .....New Delhi (RJ)
09:25 .....Beirut (RJ)
09:30 .....Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
09:45 .....Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
09:45 .....Aqaba (add) (RJ)
10:00.....Colombo (RJ)
14:55 ..New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:00 .....Cairo (RJ)
16:30 .....London (RJ)
22:00 .....Milan, Rome (RJ)
22:30 .....Berlin, Frankfurt (RJ)
23:30 ..... Paris (RJ)
04:30 .....Bangkok (RJ)

Other Flights
05:05 London, Damascus (BA)
13:10 Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)
14:05 .....Vienna (OS)
15:25 .....Dubai, Muscat (EK)
17:40 .....Beirut (ME)
18:00 .....Paris (AF)
18:05 .....Frankfurt (LH)
22:35 .....Cairo (MS)
22:40 .....Amsterdam (KL)
00:05 London, Damascus (BA)
01:05 .....Belgrade (JU)
02:00 .....Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW)
09:20 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA and proceeding to Marka Airport) (RW)
18:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport)
22:25 Aqaba (Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
05:45 .....Beirut (RJ)
07:30 .....Aqaba (add) (RJ)
10:45 .....Berlin, Frankfurt (RJ)
11:00 .....Milan, Rome (RJ)
12:00 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:00 .....Geneva, Madrid(RJ)
12:10 ..... Paris (RJ)
12:15 .....Cario (RJ)
13:05 ..... London (RJ)
13:45 ..... Madrid(RJ)
20:05 ...Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
20:20 ..... Bombay (RJ)
20:25 ..... Jeddah (RJ)
21:00 ....Abu Dahbi, Dubai (RJ)

Other Flights
06:35 ..Damascus, London (BA)
14:00 Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (GF)
14:50 .....Vienna (OS)
18:00 .....Dubai (EK)
19:00 .....Beirut (ME)
23:40 ..Beirut, Amsterdam (KL)
02:10 ..... Belgrade (JU)
03:00 .....Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW)
07:00 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport)
20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)

Contacts continue with Syria over Jordanian prisoners' release — minister

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government is pursuing contacts with the Syrian authorities to secure the release of Jordanian citizens, especially prisoners of conscience, held in Syria, Justice Minister Jawdat Sboul said Thursday.

Sboul was quoted by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, as saying that His Majesty King Hussein had personally contacted the Syrian leadership to seek the release of a number of Jordanian detainees and that the government's contacts with the Syrians have not stopped.

The minister made his remarks one day after families of Jordanian prisoners and detainees in Syria staged a sit-in near Parliament to press for the release of their kin.

During the peaceful 90-minute protest, hundreds of participants held photos of relatives said to have been detained by the Syrian authorities, many of whom without trial, and raised placards calling on President Hafez Assad to order their release.

Imad Sharqawi, a lawyer and spokesperson for the committee that organised the protest, said the families might stage further sit-ins near the Prime Ministry and the Syrian embassy.

He said more than 1,000 Jordanians are either imprisoned or missing in Syria.

Sboul said that "we accept the views of all people because we live in a democracy. We also hear others attacking us but we do not want to reply to them, not because we are in a position of weakness but rather because we are assuming this position in compliance with directives from our leadership, which does not want us to act in a manner that is not in the interest of the Arab Nation."

"In Jordan, we give priority to pan-Arab national interests, which we place above those of individual states," he added.

Sharqawi said a letter was submitted to acting Lower House Speaker Nawaf Khawaldeh calling among other things for international human rights groups to send fact-finding missions to Syria to enquire about the fate of Jordanian prisoners.

REGENT, PRINCESS SARVATH RECEIVE STUDENTS: Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, and Princess Sarvath, honorary vice president of the Jordan National Red Crescent Society, meet with students from Al Ittihad Schools who participated in the society's 50th anniversary celebrations. Prince Hassan and Princess Sarvath expressed appreciation of the students' participation in the event, which was held under Royal patronage. The Regent called on the public to dedicate humanitarian efforts to further promoting the activities and projects of the society, especially in helping the sick and elderly and the less fortunate (Photo by Boghos)

Government considering ban on imported processed cheese

Products suspected of carrying 'mad cow' disease

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh

AMMAN — The government is considering imposing a ban on imported processed cheese products because of suspicions that they may contain calf enzymes carrying the "mad cow" disease.

According to a Health Ministry official, the ministry has impounded around 20 containers of cheese that entered through Aqaba port and will conduct "thorough tests" before releasing the products.

"However, a final government ban on processed cheese is still an option," the official said.

According to Nizar Darwazeh, president of the General Association for Foodstuffs Merchants, the ministry last month ordered the director of the Aqaba Customs Department to refuse entry to processed cheese containing rennet, the enzyme suspected of carrying bovine spongiform encephalopathy, commonly referred to as mad cow disease.

Rennet is a substance prepared from the stomachs of calves and is used for curdling milk and making cheese.

In a report sent by the association on Sept. 30 to the prime minister and the minister of industry, trade and supply, Darwazeh said the government had created a new crisis and put obstacles before merchants and foodstuffs' importers.

Darwazeh told the Jordan Times that cheese banned from entry originated from France, Holland and Denmark.

"Cheese manufacturing in France or any part of the world is always done through the use of the [rennet] enzyme," he said, adding that Jordan itself imports the enzyme for local cheese processing.

He noted that rennet is usually extracted in its purest form from calves' stomachs after performing several complicated chemical operations and that it has nothing to do with bovine meat or milk.

"Banning the entry of cheese and allowing the import of the enzyme is baseless, as it is well-known that the use of this enzyme for cheese processing all over the world has not stopped after mad cow disease was discovered," he added.

The report said the government should have consulted with the Food and Agriculture Organisation before taking its "grave" decision to ban the cheese while at the same time allowing the entry of the enzyme.

It suggested that the government take more time to check if the cheese did in fact carry the disease and to allow its entry if tests proved negative. It also requested that the government not further impede imports.

Government officials, however, refuted the accusations and said the cheese was not banned from entry but was being tested and would later be released.

Darwazeh said that "around 20 containers of French cheese were banned from entry for 15 days in September," adding that the government later allowed the entry of the cheese.

But an official spokesperson for the French embassy's commercial section told the Jordan Times that the decision to allow the entry of the cheese was temporary and that it would be banned again after two months as the trade agreements signed between both countries allow the French a period of two months before the government halts imports.

In a statement made available to the Jordan Times, Alya Azar, the sectorial attaché for the food sector at the French embassy, said the Jordanian government cannot continue to place non-tariff restrictions on the imports of foodstuffs.

"The commercial attaché at the embassy is already facing problems with the Jordanian Ministry of Agriculture over imports of frozen chicken, bovine meat and now with processed cheese," the statement said, adding that no country in the world other than Jordan has ever prohibited the import of cheese because it contained the enzyme rennet.

Azar said the imports of processed cheese, such as La Vache Qui Rit, Rigal Picon, Boy and others, represent a high percentage of the total imports of food products from France.

"The banning of processed cheese goes against all rules and regulations of free trade agreements," she said. Azar added that the embassy will contact the French Ministry of Agriculture as well as cheese manufacturers in a bid to persuade them to use a different enzyme or method in processing cheese.

Health Minister Nael Ajlouni said in an interview with the Arabic daily Al Ra'i that the ban was still under consideration and that the government would not harm trade. But he insisted that the cheese be tested to ensure the safety of dairy products.

He added that importing foodstuffs of bovine origin from countries suspected of having mad cow disease should include a free of disease certificate and that the ministry has every right to test the products and ban them if they prove contaminated.

Crown Prince calls for continued Jordan-U.S. economic cooperation

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, has called for continued Jordanian-U.S. economic cooperation and the transfer of modern technology to boost the national economy.

The Regent was speaking at a meeting with a delegation representing the U.S. Albemarle firm, which on Thursday signed a $120 million deal with the Jordan Dead Sea Industries Company (JODICO) for a bromine production complex at the Dead Sea.

The Crown Prince said that the concept of industrial and production management should be deepened and that interaction between industry and the local community in the Ghor Safi region was "important."

Jordan must also utilise local natural resources to benefit local communities, he added.

The deal, which was signed by the chairman of the Board of Directors of the Arab Potash Company, Saleh Irsheidat, and the board chairman of JODICO, Awni Masri, for Jordan and E. Whithead Elmore, president of Albemarle, is a 50-50 revenue-sharing venture between JODICO and the U.S. firm, which will contribute most of the necessary technology.

Under the deal, the plant is expected to produce 50,000 tonnes of bromine, 35,000 tonnes of calcium bromide and 50,000 tonnes of terabromobisphenol, a fire retardant, according to Masri.

Masri said the estimated $40 million capital joint venture should be in place by May 1999.

Following the signing ceremony at the Ministry of Industry and Trade, Irsheidat said work on the project will start by the beginning of next year with production to start three years later.

U.S. Ambassador to Jordan William Burns, who attended the signing ceremony, said the deal will further contribute to strengthening the Jordanian economy.

Burns said economic growth can only be achieved through investment rather than aid assistance alone.

'Legislation should be upgraded to comply with property rights agreement'

By Hind-Lara Mango

AMMAN — Participants at a seminar on intellectual property rights (IPR) last week recommended that Jordanian legislation be upgraded to comply with the requirements of the TRIPS (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) agreement.

"Despite developments in Jordanian legislation, there is still need to draft regulations relating to undisclosed information, plant breeder's rights, integrated circuits and geographical indications," said Maher Matalka, secretary general of the Jordanian Association of Manufacturers of Pharmaceuticals and Medical Appliances.

The seminar concentrated on a number of themes pertaining to IPR and the implications of the TRIPS agreement on Jordan's industry, particularly pharmaceuticals.

Participants said that complying with the TRIPs agreement will be "a long and expensive process" for Jordan.

"The introduction of new disciplines will require changes in the behaviour of industry and consumers. The private sector should be given sufficient information and time to absorb and comply with the new rules," Matalka told the Jordan Times.

Article 65 of the TRIPS agreement allows developing countries to delay up to 10 years, from the date of entry into force of the agreement, the recognition of pharmaceutical patents. Jordan signed the agreement in 1995.

"The 10-year transitional period is of paramount importance for this industry to adjust in terms of upgrading facilities and training," Matalka said, adding that "Jordanian pharmaceutical companies will not be able to manufacture new products anymore, depriving Arab and Jordanian citizens access to new products at affordable prices."

TRIPS establishes minimum universal standards on patents, copyrights, and trademarks.

The employment of an IPR system together with updated technology will be "essential" for Jordan to acquire a qualitative edge in production.

"Exports require qualitative production which can be attained through the reform and modernisation of the infrastructure and administration of industrial property," said Shahid Ali Khan, former World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) deputy director.

He stressed the need for national economic plans to have an intellectual property plan for growth purposes to shoulder the high cost on IPRs: "A patent fund should be created by government, as the registration of inventions is costly. This fund would encourage the commercialisation of inventions."

The seminar, organised by WIPO and the Ministry of Industry and Trade, stressed that by expanding and strengthening IPR protection, Jordan's development goals would be achieved within a framework of increased trade-flow of investments and technology.

However, it was noted that international economic and regulatory pressures facing the pharmaceutical industry and the high production costs of new products have propelled the industry towards more mergers and acquisitions.

"This has caused smaller producers to become vulnerable in terms of their innovative and marketing abilities to industrial giants," Matalka said.

Participants said IPRs play a significant role in technological economic development enhanced by cooperation with academia.

"It is important to foster linkages among research and development centres, universities and industry," Ali Khan told the Jordan Times.

"Much more awareness is required about the techno-economic impact of IPRs. Universities and research and development centres should be encouraged to provide industry with the latest research," he said.

Man executed for 1996 murder

Third execution this year

By Rana Husseini

AMMAN — A 47-year-old self-described "healer" convicted of robbing and killing a woman in 1996 was hanged at dawn on Thursday at Swaqa Prison, officials said Friday.

Mustafa Abdul Mustafa was sentenced to death by the Criminal Court in March for murdering Heigar Ali, 44, in his Jerash home on Feb. 8, 1996.

Officials who attended the execution said Mustafa, who was married to two wives and was the father of 14 children, requested that they ask his relatives to take care of his family.

According to court documents, the victim was a long-time acquaintance of Abdul Mustafa and often visited him to obtain medication for stomach pains.

On the day of the incident, court transcripts said, the woman went to Abdul Mustafa's house for medication.

Due to past arguments with the woman, Abdul Mustafa decided to kill her both in revenge and for financial gain because she was wearing gold, the transcripts said.

Abdul Mustafa mixed poison with an herbal drink and gave it to the woman, a mother of four, the court said, adding that she died in four minutes.

He then put Ali's body in a box and took it to the Jineh Highway in the Sukhneh area of Zarqa, where set her body ablaze in an attempt to conceal the crime, the court said.

He then sold the gold for JD805.

Abdul Mustafa was originally sentenced to life in March 1997, but the Criminal Court, acting upon the Court of Cassation's request, handed down the death penalty at a resentencing hearing in March.

The execution, the third to be carried out in the Kingdom this year, was attended by the centre's director, the prosecutor general, the centre's mufti, a pathologist and other officials.

Man sentenced to death for murder

Also Thursday, a 20-year-old man was sentenced to death by the Criminal Court for robbing and murdering an 80-year-old woman in Ramtha last year.

Ahmad Hamdan was sentenced to 20 years in prison on April 12 after being convicted by the Criminal Court of murdering Fatmeh Taha on May 13, 1997.

But the Court of Cassation, which reviewed the case, returned it to the Criminal Court in August 1998 and asked it to increase the sentence.

The Criminal Court, comprising Justices Ahmad Khatib, Sami Karaki and Ibrahim Ali, also upheld a 12-year prison sentence against 17-year-old Mohammad Freih, who was convicted of complicity in the murder.

According to court documents, the two defendants decided to rob the victim, who lived alone.

"On the night of the murder, the two entered her house and attacked her while she was sleeping. Hamdan pinned her to the bed, while Freih strangled her to death," the court said.

The two left with JD65.

The verdict will be reviewed by the Court of Cassation within 30 days.

what's going on

FILM

* "Goya: El capricho y la invención" (in Spanish with commentary by Dr. Khalid Khreis) at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman on Sunday, Oct. 18 at 6:30 p.m. (Tel. 4610858).

CONCERT

* Musical performance by Freddy for Music at the Royal Cultural Centre at 7:00 p.m.

PLAY

* "The Road to Safety" (in Arabic) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m. (Daily until Oct. 18).

LECTURE

* "The Geography of Space" by Palestinian artist Kamal Boullata at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh on Sunday Oct. 18 at 6:00 p.m.

THE PALESTINIAN HERITAGE WEEK

* Seminar entitled "The Role of Ulema in the Defence of Al Aqsa (Mosque)" with the participation of Dr. Mohammad Abu Faris, Dr. Ali Al Sawa, Sheikh Ibrahim Al 'Ali, in addition to Sheikh Hamid Al Baytawi and Dr. Abdul Majid Al Zandani (both of whom will participate by phone) at the Professional Associations Complex on Sunday Oct. 18 at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Display of autumn collection at The Jordan Design and Trade Centre, off Wadi Saqra St. until Oct. 31 (Tel. 5699141/2).

* Exhibition of works by Palestinian artist Kamal Boullata entitled "Homage to Jerusalem," an exhibition of paintings by late Palestinian artist Zulfa Al Sa'di, an exhibition by Palestinian-American photographer Sa'id Nuseibah entitled "The Farthest Mosque" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until Nov. 12, (Tel. 4643251/2).

* Goya's Caprichos paintings at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman (Tel. 4610858), until Oct. 23.

* "International Motor Show 99" at the Amman International Motor Show, Airport Road (Tel. 5714211), until Oct. 17.

* "Calligraphy on Crafts" at the Jordan Craft Centre (Al Aydi), Jabal Amman (Tel. 4644555), October 18-31.

* Works by Lamia Jamal at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, until Oct. 26.

* Art of Arab calligraphy by Nassar Mansour at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts (Tel. 4630128), until Oct. 23.

Jordanian woman honoured by UNDP for fighting poverty

AMMAN (J.T.) — Miyasser Saadi of Jordan was one of five women from around the world honoured by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at an awards ceremony commemorating the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty in New York, a UNDP statement said Friday.

The women, who were selected by the UNDP headquarters for their personal triumph in overcoming poverty, were presented their awards by U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan before an audience of high-ranking U.N. officials, celebrities, representatives of non-governmental organisations and the media.

The high-profile ceremony featured a brief video of each woman's work, followed by a statement from Miyasser and the other award recipients about the impact of poverty on their lives and their communities. The other four awardees came from France, India, the Dominican Republic and Uganda, the statement said.

At the age of 50, Miyasser's eyes reveal little of the challenges she has faced throughout her life which eventually led her to be honoured in the international spotlight.

She was born in 1948 in the city of Haifa in Palestine. The same year, when the first Arab-Israeli war broke out, Miyasser and her parents fled to the West Bank. She lived there with her family until her father arranged a marriage for her at age 16. Miyasser agreed to the union, but only on the condition that she be allowed to hold a job, defying a tradition of women remaining at home. Her father consented, and Miyasser became a nurse soon after her wedding.

When the second Arab-Israeli war broke out in 1967, Miyasser, her husband and two daughters were among 140,000 Palestinians who fled to Jordan. Miyasser recalls leaving with only the clothes on their backs. She had no choice but to move in with her extended family in a cramped dwelling in the poor neighbourhood of Jabal Al Nuzha in Amman.

Undeterred by her own difficult living conditions, Miyasser spent the next 30 years helping others. Every day, she travelled to refugee camps nearly 60 kilometres away in the Jordan Valley to offer her nursing services to the sick and needy. When fighting erupted between Jordanian and Israeli troops at the Battle of Karamah in 1968, she travelled to the battlefield, caring for the wounded, some of whom died in her arms. When national immunisation campaigns were held, Miyasser plied the streets of her neighbourhood, making sure children received their vaccinations.

During this trying period, Miyasser gave birth two more times. Despite her family's meagre income, she managed to put all four of her children through school and send them to universities. Loans helped cover the cost of tuition.

After retiring from nursing in 1993, Miyasser continued working as a volunteer with several women's groups, encouraging the poor to participate in income-generating projects to supplement their families' earnings. Miyasser knew from her own experience that a little support can help women dramatically improve people's lives.

As a member of the Jordanian Women's Union, Miyasser conceived a plan to teach sewing skills to women, enabling them to earn a living by making handicrafts. Earlier this year, the UNDP supported the idea with a $10,000 grant that allowed the union to purchase sewing machines and other equipment and to rent out a small work space.

Miyasser Saadi

Miyasser initially invited six poverty-stricken women — two of whom were widows with children — to participate in the project. But first Miyasser had to take on the difficult task of convincing their male relatives to break from tradition and let the women leave their homes and children for part of the day.

The women now earn between JD30 and JD40 a month, making colourful linens, embroidered fabrics, dresses and dolls sold at handicraft centres such as the Noor Al Hussein Foundation and elsewhere. The project was recently expanded to benefit about 15 other women who work out of their own homes, and Miyasser wants to recruit even more women. To help her meet her goal, she is busy promoting the centre's products and seeking additional funding and clients.

Miyasser points to a major change in women's lives as a result of project, not only in terms of income, but also in terms of control over their destinies.

"Women who work don't have to play a passive role in the family," she explains. "Being a money-maker gives a woman independence and a voice in decision-making at home."

Miyasser's family and friends view her as a role model for women and have urged her to run for a seat in Parliament. She brushes them off, saying she prefers to work as she has always done, directly helping people. She wants to give other women the same kinds of opportunities she had to make decisions that affect their lives.

Her struggles and achievements have already made her rich, Miyasser says. "Wealth does not come from money. It comes from within yourself, from goodwill and people's trust in you."

West, Yugoslavs sign second surveillance accord on Kosovo

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia (AP) — Yugoslavia took another step Friday towards restoring peace to Kosovo, signing an agreement to let 2,000 international "verifiers" provide firsthand reports whether Slobodan Milosevic is honouring the deal to end the crisis.

The deal was signed with the 54-nation Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as NATO envoys were meeting in Brussels, Belgium to decide whether to extend the deadline for the Yugoslav president to comply with the Kosovo agreement or risk airstrikes.

NATO had set a deadline of early Saturday for Milosevic to withdraw special troops sent to crush ethnic Albanian rebels, allow the 300,000 refugees to return home and begin talks on the future of the southern province in Serbia, the dominant Yugoslav Republic.

Under the agreement signed Friday, 2,000 unarmed monitors will be allowed to roam Kosovo to make sure Milosevic has withdrawn the additional troops and to reassure ethnic Albanian refugees that it is safe to return home.

"This is only the first step," OSCE chairman Bronislaw Geremek, Poland's foreign minister, said after signing the agreement with Yugoslav Foreign Minister Zivadin Jovanic.

Geremek said the Yugoslavs had guaranteed the safety of the unarmed force and that he would ask NATO to do the same. He said he had received promises from member countries for about 800 volunteers, although he did not say how long it would take to train, equip and station them.

In the meantime, NATO spy planes will begin flying over Yugoslavia shortly under an agreement signed late Thursday by NATO's supreme allied commander for Europe, Gen. Wesley Clark, and Yugoslav Army Chief of Staff Gen. Momcilo Perisic.

That will help the Alliance determine Milosevic's compliance even before the monitors start their work on the ground.

Despite those measures, NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana said Thursday in Belgrade that Milosevic had a long way to go to meet his promises.

"He must comply, he must comply fully and immediately," Solana said after meeting with the Yugoslav leader. "According to our information, and our information is good, many army and special police units remain in Kosovo."

Hundreds of people have been killed since Milosevic began his crackdown in February to crush the ethnic Albanian Kosovo Liberation Army. The KLA has killed more than 200 Serb policemen, Serb civilians and ethnic Albanians loyal to Milosevic's government.

Ethnic Albanians make up about 90 per cent of Kosovo's 2 million inhabitants, and most of them favour independence or substantial self-rule. The United States has been spearheading international efforts to revive negotiations between Serbs and ethnic Albanians on the future of the province.

The Americans and Europeans, however, oppose the militants' demand for independence, fearing this could lead to further instability among ethnic Albanian communities throughout the southern Balkans.

International efforts to get aid to refugees are accelerating in the wake of the Monday accord and with winter fast approaching.

The U.N. refugee agency sent a six-truck aid convoy to Djakovica near the Albanian border Friday and were stepping up aid efforts, spokeswoman Judith Kumin said in Geneva. She said workers had observed a continuing widespread fear of Serb forces, preventing any full flow of refugees back to their charred homes.

Also Friday, the head of the first U.S. government team of aid workers to go to Kosovo since the agreement was leaving for the Serbian province. Roy Williams, disaster relief coordinator for the U.S. Agency for International Development, said he expects the new "unfettered access" will speed distribution of aid.

He said there is enough food and other supplies to sustain the scattered population during the winter if they can return to their homes, but meeting medical needs will be a difficult challenge.

German parliament backs Kosovo deployment

BONN (R) — Germany's outgoing parliament voted overwhelmingly in emergency session Friday to allow German soldiers and aircraft to take part in NATO action against Serbia over Kosovo.

It was the first time Germany had given the green light to the possible use of force outside NATO boundaries without a specific U.N. mandate.

Chancellor-elect Gerhard Schroeder backed the deployment decided by conservative Chancellor Helmut Kohl before he lost the Sept. 27 election.

Schroeder's Social Democrats are negotiating to forge a centre-left coalition government with the Greens, some of whom remained true to their pacifist, anti-NATO roots.

The motion was approved 503 to 63 votes with 18 abstentions.

The SPD and Greens were allowed a free vote of conscience.

"We cannot escape our responsibilities," Schroeder told the Bundestag lower house, recalled between administrations for the first time since World War II.

Kohl offered the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation 500 soldiers and 14 Tornado planes for strikes if Yugoslavia breaks its promise to end a military crackdown on ethnic Albanians in its southern Kosovo province. The deployment could not take place without parliamentary approval.

Political analysts said Schroeder was happy to go along with the Kohl's offer now rather than face a row over deployment with the Greens in his first days in office.

He hopes to conclude a coalition pact with the Greens within a week. The Bundestag will then meet on Oct. 27 to vote him into office.

The two sides met again Friday to discuss welfare policy and the thorny issue of pensions.

Schroeder said he hoped military intervention would not be necessary after U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke's success in getting Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to agree to pull his forces out of Kosovo.

But the threat of force was needed because Milosevic had repeatedly tested how far he could go with the West in the crisis over the mainly ethnic Albanian province, Schroeder said.

Milosevic was given until Saturday to comply with agreement or face possible air strikes, but some allies, notably France, want to extend the deadline by 10 days. NATO ambassadors were due to meet Friday to decide how much more time to give Milosevic.

Schroeder, who has promised continuity in German foreign policy, said Russia, which has close ties with Serbia, must not be excluded.

"We must use our good relations with Russia to solve this," he said.

Greens leader Joschka Fischer, tapped by Schroeder as foreign minister, said he doubted NATO's military threat was legal without a mandate from the U.N. Security Council. But he said maintaining pressure on Milosevic was crucial.

"If the international community had not piled on the pressure, there would be many more innocent victims among the Kosovo Albanians mostly. We would at best have another Bosnia and at worse a great war," he said.

"We must not allow this in Europe if we learn from our history in the bloody first half of this century." The vote is an agonising test for his party, torn between pacifism and realism as it stands on the threshold of government.

German troops man a third of AWACS military surveillance flights and, in their first combat mission since World War II, took part in reconnaissance during the Western alliance's air strikes against Bosnian Serb forces in 1995.

Peru, Ecuador agree to international plan for border dispute

LIMA (AFP) — The Ecuadorian and Peruvian Congresses just hours apart early Friday agreed to accept an international formula designed to end their long-running border dispute.

The two legislative bodies agreed to abide with conditions to be set out by four guarantor nations — Argentina, Brazil, Chile and the United States — for a settlement.

The four countries, guarantors of a 1942 territorial agreement between Ecuador and Peru which has fallen by the wayside, had been asked by both nations to intercede in the dispute which has led to repeated fighting over the last century.

The request for intervention followed skirmishing on the border in 1995 and the repeated failure of bilateral talks to reach agreement over the dispute which is centred around a 78 kilometre stretch of remote jungle-covered hills that both countries claim.

The guarantors had asked lawmakers in Peru and Ecuador to agree to respect whatever decision the four countries arrive at. Peru's Congress, which began discussing the issue Wednesday, approved the proposal after heated debate in the early hours of Friday by a vote of 87 to 26 with one abstention. Ecuador's Congress approved the proposal by a vote of 95 to 21 with two abstentions.

Congressional supporters of Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori were strongly in favour of the proposal but key opposition figures opposed it because they felt the plan gave too much power to the guarantors.

The border negotiations are a sensitive issue in Peru, and over the past weeks Peru's top three foreign affairs officials resigned over disagreements with Fujimori on the negotiations.

In Ecuador, President Jamil Mahuad has pushed for the guarantor plan saying that if it were not accepted, war would be an option. The guarantor countries said they will present a solution once both sides had agreed to respect their decision.

Rival Northern Ireland politicians John Hume (left) and David Trimble, seen in this combo picture, were awarded the 1998 Nobel Peace Prize. The prize was awarded for their efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Northern Ireland, in which 3,600 people have died (Reuters photo)

Nobel Peace Prize not end of road for N. Ireland

LONDON (AFP) — The Nobel Peace Prize awarded to John Hume and David Trimble rewards their part in Northern Ireland's historic peace agreement, and also serves to bolster the still shaky accord.

Although endorsed by a large majority of people north and south of the border, and across both sections of the religious divide, the agreement still faces a number of threats.

It must overcome dissent among some Protestants, unhappy at what they see as too many compromises with pro-united Ireland Catholic nationalists.

Some hardline nationalists are also disappointed that the accord enshrines Northern Ireland's position by insisting that any change in its current status within the United Kingdom must be agreed by the majority in the province.

Hume and Trimble lead the province's two biggest parties, Hume the mainly Catholic Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and Trimble the Protestant and pro-British Ulster Unionists (UUP).

Hume, 61, was often a lone voice in insisting violence was not the way to achieve a united Ireland. More controversially, he also called for the IRA's political wing Sinn Fein to be included in the peace process.

Trimble, 54, was regarded as a hardliner when he was elected UUP leader in 1995, but soon stunned everyone with a series of political initiatives, while persuading Protestants to share power with Catholics.

His latest initiative was a meeting on Sept. 10 with Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams, the first time in more than 70 years that a unionist leader had met face-to-face with his republican counterpart.

Both men took huge strides to achieve the historic April 10 accord that ended nearly 30 years of bloody sectarian violence, but Friday's recompense by the Norwegian Nobel committee in Oslo is not the end of the story.

First, the power-sharing institutions created by the peace accord are to take office by February.

Second, three key questions must be resolved by spring 2000 — the final release of all prisoners, reform of the Northern Ireland police and paramilitary disarmament.

Around half of the 446 prisoners from paramilitary groups who have declared a ceasefire will be released by Christmas.

Meanwhile, the last governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten, will soon launch talks on reforming the police, regarded by many Catholics as too dominated by Protestants.

But the trickiest question is disarmament — none of the paramilitaries has agreed to give up a single weapon or kilo of explosives.

Pushed by Protestants who claim he has given way too much already, Trimble insists Sinn Fein can only take office in the new administration once the IRA has begun disarming.

Ian Paisley Jnr, of the hardline Democratic Unionist Party, said the Nobel prize committee was "a farce. These people have not delivered peace, nor are they peacemakers. ... until the weapons of war are surrendered we cannot say we have the beginning of a real peace."

But Hume and Trimble will still enjoy the backing of other key players in the peace process — U.S. President Bill Clinton and British and Irish premiers Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern.

In his first reaction, Hume said the prize was "a very powerful international approval" of the peace process which would "strengthen" the search for peace.

"I see this award as a very powerful endorsement of the peace process and of peace on our streets".

Trimble, now Northern Ireland's first minister, was asleep when the Nobel announcement was made and had asked not to be woken, the Norwegian agency NTB reported.

He was in a hotel in Denver, Colorado, on the final stop of a tour aimed at attracting American investors to Northern Ireland.

In its citation, the Norwegian Nobel Committee said:

"John Hume has throughout been the clearest and most consistent of Northern Ireland's political leaders in his work for a peaceful solution."

Of Trimble, it said: "As the leader of the traditionally predominant party in Northern Ireland, David Trimble showed great political courage when, at a critical stage of the process, he advocated solutions which led to the peace agreement."

U.K. diplomats to work with rights groups

LONDON (R) — British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook Friday said his diplomats would from now on work much more closely with human rights groups such as Amnesty International in a bid to cut down on abuses abroad.

Cook also told an Amnesty conference that Britain wanted to use its influence to persuade other countries to abolish the death penalty and was launching an initiative to fight torture wherever it happened in the world.

"There are too many countries where abuse of human rights is tolerated," said Cook, citing Burma (Myanmar), Serbia, Iraq and Afghanistan.

"This is far from a perfect world. I do not suppose it ever will be. But I get angry when people use this as an excuse for not trying," he said.

"We can make a difference. Speaking out, we can stop the worst excesses of some regimes." Cook said upon taking office last year that Britain would have a more ethically-based foreign policy but critics accuse him of keeping quiet on human rights abuses in countries which also happen to be major trading partners.

He lavished praise on Amnesty, saying no group had campaigned harder for human rights over the last 20 years.

"I want to draw on the expertise and the commitment of Amnesty in order that we can build a new dialogue for our joint objectives," he said.

Harriet Ware-Austin from Amnesty International will join the Foreign Office on an unpaid sabbatical to advise on human rights strategy and projects while Dan Seymour from Save The Children will join to advise on the rights of children.

Staff from the Foreign Office will go on secondment to human rights groups such as Article 19 and all new ambassadors being posted to countries with histories of human rights abuse will go to Amnesty and other groups for briefings.

"We are happy to have a close relationship with the government but it will be one in which we can praise or criticise where need be," said Amnesty press officer Richard Bunting.

Cook said he had convened a panel of experts to advise on the strategy Britain should adopt to abolish the death penalty globally. Britain would host a major international conference next year on penal reform, he added.

Cook also announced a programme to cut the use of torture and said Britain would lobby states around the world to ratify the United Nations Convention on Torture, which so far has only been officially backed by 105 nations.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Dalai Lama calls for universal harmony and peace

NEW DELHI, India (AP) — Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhists, was joined by hundreds of his exiled countrymen Friday in special prayers calling for universal harmony and peace. Sitting on a throne on a raised platform, the Tibetan leader gave a two-hour sermon on the teachings of the Buddha during a special prayer festival in the Indian capital. The festival continues a 700-year-old tradition that began in Tibet in the 14th century to commemorate Buddha's teachings. The Ceremony of Gathering Light opened with sacred chants for world peace in the tradition of The Great Prayer Festivals that were held annually in Lhasa until the Chinese army seizure of Tibet in 1950. The festival continued in India after the Dalai Lama fled Tibet in 1959 along with thousands of followers and established a new seat in the town of Dharmsala in India's Himalayan foothills. Monks, schoolchildren, lay followers and Indian Hindus listened raptly as the Tibetan leader gave his discourse in Tibetan, which was translated into English. He made no political comment during his sermon. Behind him, on a raised platform was a two-metre high statue of Buddha in gold that was installed in a New Delhi park five years ago.

Japan says it may resume nuclear reactor aid to North Korea

TOKYO (AP) — Japan is considering lifting the suspension of aid to an international project to build nuclear reactors in North Korea, the Japanese Foreign Ministry said Friday. Japan froze its $1 billion contribution to the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation project after North Korea's surprise firing of a rocket into Japanese airspace on Aug. 31. The launch — which Japan says was a ballistic missile and North Korea claims placed a research satellite into orbit — rattled Tokyo by demonstrating Pyongyang's ability to strike any part of Japan. But Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi's ruling Liberal Democratic Party and government officials may lift the freeze because it is important for KEDO to succeed, said a Foreign Ministry spokesman, who declined to be named. The KEDO consortium was formed as part of a 1994 agreement in which North Korea agreed to halt its nuclear weapons development programme in exchange for two Western-built light-water civilian reactors and fuel-oil shipments. Members of the KEDO consortium — the United States, Japan, South Korea and the European Union — have been unable to adopt a resolution to fund the $4.6 billion project because of Japan's suspension of its aid. That resolution may now be adopted as early as next week, Japan's Kyodo News agency reported Friday.

U.S. companies to study industrial environmental issues, investment

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — A group of U.S. companies that helps make industries environment friendly will visit Sri Lanka next week to study business potential, a spokesman for the U.S.-Asia Environmental Partnership said Friday. "The good news is that many Sri Lankan companies have shown interest to know how they can protect the environment," said Spencer King, the chief executive of Technology Initiative for Private Sector, a USAID-funded group which is coordinating the visit. Sri Lanka, a developing country with 18.5 million people off India's southern coast, is facing an increasing threat of pollution from industrial waste from tanneries, textile factories and chroming industries. Representatives from five American companies dealing with waste minimisation, solid waste, water treatment, waste water management and alternative energy, will begin a three-day visit Oct. 21. King said it was difficult to quantify investment potential at this stage, but it could be substantial from Sri Lanka's point of view. For example, he said, one project that will generate electricity from garbage is estimated to cost $100 million.

Four Russian children die from food poisoning

MOSCOW (AP) — Four children died after eating contaminated food at a boarding home near the Siberian prison camp where their mothers are being held, a news report said. Twenty more children have fallen ill. Russian prison camps for women traditionally have adjoining boarding homes for the convicts' small children. Investigators believe that the children at the camp near the city of Kemerovo contracted salmonella poisoning after eating contaminated food, the ITAR-TASS news agency reported. Symptoms of the disease include stomach pains, diarrhoea, nausea, chills, fever and headache. The salmonella bacteria can be killed by thorough cooking.

Doctors begin Japan's first authorised sex-change operation

TOKYO (AP) — Doctors removed the breasts, uterus and ovaries of a 30-year-old woman Friday in the initial stage of Japan's first legal sex change operation. The woman, who has asked to be identified as K. Nakahara, says the operation with allow her to finally get a body she can feel is her own. The surgery, which was performed at Saitama Medical College, north of Tokyo, was completed successfully, said Haruo Nose, a spokesman for the medical centre. "The patient is fine," Nose said. In a second operation, to be conducted in six months, doctors will construct male genitals. Nakahara, from northeastern Japan, was quoted by a Tokyo television station as saying that she had felt uncomfortable with her gender since her youth and that the operation would give her a body that was truly hers. In May, the ethics committee at the college approved carrying out the sex change. The Japanese Society of Psychiatry and Neurology said last year that sex-change operations should be permitted on the condition that patients undergo psychoanalysis and hormone therapy afterward.

Spanish mountaineer stands on Everest for a minute

KATHMANDU, India (R) — A Spanish mountaineer climbed to the highest point on earth, becoming the 809th person to reach the 8,484-metre summit of Mount Everest, Nepal's tourism ministry said Friday. Carlos Pitarch, a 31-year-old lawyer, reached the peak Thursday morning, alone, after leaving his camp at 7,900 metres to climb up the south-eastern ridge, the ministry said. Pitarch, the 31st Spaniard to reach the top of the world, only spent a minute there because of extremely strong winds, the ministry said. There are two Japanese teams attempting to reach Everest's summit this week or next. A Nepalese sherpa climber, Kaji Sherpa, is also planning to become the fastest person to climb the mountain by doing it in 18 hours.

Pakistani foreign secretary Shamshad Ahmad (right) receives his Indian counterpart K. Raghunath before entering the meeting hall for bilateral talks in Islamabad. India and Pakistan resumed stalled peace talks to tackle issues that have bedevilled relations between the neighbouring nuclear powers for the past 51 years (Reuters photo)

Pakistan and India end year old negotiating deadlock

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Pakistan and India returned to the negotiating table Friday, after a break of more than a year, to discuss nuclear restraint and disputes underlying half a century of strained ties.

But Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmad, in remarks to reporters before sitting down with his Indian counterpart K. Raghunath, cautioned against expecting any "quick fix" solutions from the three days of contacts.

He said the talks were an initial "step" towards tackling the rivals' problems, including their dispute over the Himalayan state of Kashmir, divided between the two, claimed by both and at the cause of two wars between them.

The leaders of the two delegations had vowed a "purposeful and sincere" to negotiations on the eve of the meeting being held at Punjab House, a provincial government rest house.

But a tight-lipped Raghunath offered no comment to a barrage of questions by journalists as he paced toward the conference hall.

"For Pakistan and the international community the core issue is Kashmir," Ahmad told reporters, stressing that peace and security in the region was linked to a settlement in Kashmir which was now a "nuclear flashpoint."

He said the two countries, which carried out rival atomic weapons tests in May, must "develop a regime for mutual nuclear restraint" and the issue would come up in the discussions.

"Following the nuclear tests the two countries face a new challenge," he said, noting that the international community was taking "greater interest" in South Asia's troubles including the nuclear danger and Kashmir.

No special security was seen and the atmosphere around the venue at the foot of the picturesque Margala hills appeared relaxed. "The weather is fine," Ahmad said, as a light drizzle made the scene greener.

The talks are based on an eight-point agenda agreed last year before the talks were bogged down in a new deadlock over Kashmir.

The list includes confidence-building measures such as easing travel restrictions, boosting limited bilateral trade, improving communication links and finding ways to avoid border exchanges between the two armies in Kashmir.

Officials said the first day of talks would be devoted to peace and security with a separate in-depth look at Kashmir Saturday.

Ahmad said the two sides would be "looking for opportunities" to move the dialogue forward.

Trade between Pakistan and India has been curtailed by their hostility.

Rail and air service links exist and an agreement in principle to boost trade was reached during a meeting in New York last month by the prime ministers of the two nations, when they decided to resume dialogue.

Islamabad wants New Delhi to concede self-determination in Kashmir under decades-old U.N. resolutions. India considers the territory its own and rules out third party mediation, which has been sought by Pakistan.

India blames Pakistan for a Muslim separatist revolt in the Indian-held part of Kashmir that has left more than 20,000 people dead since 1989.

Pakistan which controls the northern third of Kashmir denies the charge. It pledges moral and diplomatic support for the separatists, saying it is a legitimate Kashmir struggle for self-determination.

Italy centrists play government kingmaker

ROME (R) — Centrist leader Francesco Cossiga said Friday his party could support a new government led by leftist chief Massimo D'Alema, opening a chink of light on Italy's political gloom.

With the backing of Cossiga's Union of Democrats for the Republic (UDR) deputies in the lower house of parliament, D'Alema could secure a working majority and bring more than two weeks of political turmoil to a close.

President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, who wrapped up a fresh round of consultations with parliamentary leaders, was now expected to summon D'Alema to give him a mandate to form Italy's 56th government since World War II.

Laying out UDR conditions for giving D'Alema support, Cossiga said: "... if this government were to come about, the UDR gave me the mandate to tell the head of state we would vote in favour and take part in the government."

Cossiga, Italian Christian Democrat president from 1985 to 1992, said the UDR would first have to be satisfied that the new government would tackle not only the immediate, urgent problems facing Italy but also larger constitutional issues.

He said a D'Alema administration would have to embrace not only the politics of the European left but also that of "Popular parties", meaning the more centrist school of thought.

Outgoing Prime Minister Romano Prodi, who resigned after losing a confidence vote in the lower house a week ago, reacted positively to Cossiga's statement.

"If Cossiga said 'Yes' to a D'Alema mandate, a new government will be formed soon," Prodi said.

But the dark cloud over the formation of a new government has not yet lifted. Even if D'Alema is given a mandate, horsetrading with the centrists may take days to settle and could even end up with no agreement.

D'Alema can currently count on deputies in the Olive Tree bloc backed by leftists, Greens, independents and the centrist Popular Party numbering around 290 deputies in the 630-seat Chamber of Deputies. With Cossiga's 31 UDR deputies, he would clinch his majority without any recourse to Communists.

But D'Alema, a former Communist himself, has also been given backing by 21 moderate Marxist deputies, who broke away from the hardline Communist Refoundation party after it toppled Prodi.

The moderates led by veteran Communist Armando Cossutta cannot, however, by themselves provide the necessary majority to enable D'Alema to push through government business.

It may be difficult to marry moderate Communists and Cossiga centrists in a new government, and D'Alema may be forced to drop his former comrades to ensure a majority with the Cossiga team instead.

The political imbroglio erupted when Communist Refoundation led by hardliner Fausto Bertinotti refused to support Prodi's 1999 budget and then broke its 28-month pact guaranteeing the centre-left government a majority in the lower house.

If D'Alema manages to secure a working majority, he is expected to press on with the current budget draft and its 14.7 trillion lire ($9.0 billion) of deficit cuts.

Most politicians, and Scalfaro, recognise the urgent need to pass the budget before the end-year legal deadline, especially with the imminent launch of European economic and Monetary Union (EMU) that Italy fought so hard to join.

OECD chief economist Ignazio Visco said Friday he did not believe Italy's political strife would have an impact on EMU.

"I don't think there will be implications for monetary union even if (the crisis) is reflected in some way or other in the financial markets," Visco told Reuters Television Italia.

"What we have is a difficult situation...which needs a rapid solution because, if not, it could then have some negative effect on investments," he added.

Cossiga's offer to D'Alema infuriated opposition centre-right leader Silvio Berlusconi, who slammed the potential political alliance as "politically immoral".

Berlusconi, who led a short-lived seven-month government in 1994, said he was to call an urgent meeting of his Freedom Alliance bloc Sunday, which could decide on a total boycott of parliament by the opposition centre-right.

122 detained in riots during French student protest

PARIS (AFP) — Police were holding 122 youngsters in detention in Paris Friday after rioters smashed shops and bus-shelters and set vehicles ablaze in a wave of violence that erupted in the capital during high-school student protests the previous day.

Police said 75 of those detained were minors, and four of them girls.

Almost all of those brought in for damaging public and private property, looting, assault and carrying knives were from deprived outer-city suburbs and were of immigrant North African or African origin, police said.

As half a million youngsters poured onto streets country-wide Thursday demanding more teachers and better school facilities, trouble broke out in Paris as students gathered for a big march on the Place de la Nation on the east side of the city.

The rioters, many of them teenagers of 14 or 15, smashed shop windows and telephone cabins, set vehicles ablaze and clashed with police.

While marchers of the same age shouted "Rioters! Go Home", bands of highly-mobile youngsters, many of them communicating with each other by mobile phone, went on the rampage on and around the vast Place de la Nation square.

Police reported some 50 café and shop windows smashed, 100 vehicles damaged and bus shelters and telephone booths vandalised.

Five people were hurt, including two officers and a student, as the youths, many wearing scarves over their faces so as not to be identified, ran amok.

Because of the trouble, students leading a march of 28,000 protesters in Paris decided to cut short the demonstration before terminating a planned 10-kilometre trek across the southern side of the city to the education ministry.

Thursday's protest was the biggest turnout yet in two weeks of sporadic but burgeoning demonstrations by school students protesting against overcrowded classrooms, crushing work-loads, dilapidated facilities, the lack of student power in schools and of meeting-places.

The independent student association FIDL dubbed Thursday's show of force "a success" and said the trouble "was caused by groups who were not part of the protesters."

"Given the show of strength it is up to the minister now to take our demands into account," the FIDL said. "We expect urgent measures," it added, calling a new national day of action on Tuesday, Oct. 20.

Education Minister Claude Allegre, who Thursday reiterated that "the students are right" to protest, met with a delegation of pupils representing the country's 2.6 million secondary school pupils.

Allegre has urged regional authorities to release funds to upgrade facilities and has promised lighter workloads from November and new teachers as soon as possible, including conscripts with teaching diplomas who may be recalled from the army.

But students were continuing to clamour for immediate results.

"We want a calendar, we want dates, we want figures," said student leaders meeting in Paris to try to set up a national coordination council that would represent the protesters and thus be able to negotiate with the Socialist government.

"Two chairs, three students," said a banner brandished in Grenoble. "My school is filled to bursting point," said another.

Statistics show that more than half of students attending state-run "lycées" sit in classes of more than 30 pupils. 29 per cent of them in classes of more than 34 and some in classes of more than 40 pupils — overcrowding that the students say makes learning impossible.

And senior secondary students complain of badly organised timetables and of having to cram more than 30 hours of classes a week with little time left for sporting or extra-curricular activities.

Allegre, who has been at odds with the powerful teachers' trade unions since taking office last year, this week announced he would decentralise the top-heavy education system in a bid to get more teachers into more classrooms more quickly.

Hong Kong chief meets Chinese PM

BEIJING (AFP) — Hong Kong Chief Executive Tung Chee-Hwa got resounding approval from China's Premier Zhu Rongji Friday for his handling of the territory's embattled economy.

Zhu told Tung, who is on his annual duty visit to the Chinese capital, that Beijing was pleased with his policies in Hong Kong and confident of their success.

"We are confident in the ability of Hong Kong people to handle Hong Kong's affairs, and we are pleased with your work during the Asian financial crisis," Zhu said at the start of a closed door meeting in the Great Hall of the People.

"The mainland will continue to make all efforts to support Hong Kong and the central government is filled with confidence for Hong Kong's development prospects and its long stem stability and prosperity," he added.

Zhu and President Jiang Zemin have consistently supported Tung's administration as it battles to maintain the Hong Kong dollar peg to the U.S. dollar and fend off the worsening Asian financial crisis.

Tung also met Vice Premier and former Foreign Minister Qian Qichen to discuss this year's government work in Hong Kong, state television said.

The Hong Kong leader is also scheduled to meet Jiang Saturday morning before taking a vacation in mainland China.

Beijing handpicked Tung, a shipping tycoon, to run the former British colony when it returned to Chinese rule in July last year.

But since that handover, Hong Kong has sunk into its first recession in 13 years because of the Asian financial crisis and Tung has been criticised in the territory for his lacklustre performance, especially in his latest policy address.

Other crises to hit the territory include a highly-publicised outbreak of "bird flu" which killed six people and led to the slaughter of more than a million chickens, as well as the fiasco over the opening of Hong Kong's showpiece new airport in July.

Luzhkov revolution pushing Yeltsin out the door

MOSCOW (AFP) — Moscow's influential mayor Yury Luzhkov redrew Russia's political map this week when the presidential understudy brusquely axed ties with Boris Yeltsin and freed himself to fight for the Kremlin.

The break, which came in the form of a blunt suggestion Thursday that Yeltsin should quit because he was in poor health and might die in office, underscored the political isolation Russia's only democratically elected president has come to endure.

It further showed politicians have realised the best way to quickly score points with their electorate is to loudly call for Yeltsin's head.

And while Luzhkov and other top Russian politicians are not well prepared for elections due in only 2000, analysts said even friends are severing ties with the Kremlin on account of Yeltsin's failing health and staggeringly low popularity.

"I can see like all other citizens from afar that all is not well with him," Luzhkov said of Yeltsin Thursday. "I cannot rule out a situation that will lead to early presidential elections in Russia or the early resignation of the president."

Friday he added: "If a person cannot work from day to day, he must find the courage to say so."

Such remarks would have been unimaginable from Luzhkov just a few weeks ago.

The mayor for years denied his presidential aspirations. While he has fought behind-the-scenes battles with Kremlin administrators — primarily over who gets to manage Moscow's lucrative property market — he has lived by his friendship with the president.

The radical change in Luzhkov's character, analysts said, means that Yeltsin's authority today is nearing nil.

"Luzhkov no longer fears Yeltsin," observed political analyst Andrei Piontkovsky of Moscow's Centre for Strategic Studies.

"Yeltsin is in a desperate political situation," Piontkovsky said. "In Russia, presidents rule only so long as the people around him think of him as the boss. Yeltsin is no longer master of his own house."

Added Yevgeny Volk of the Heritage Foundation: "Everyone understands that supporting Yeltsin today is equal to political suicide. Only (ex-Premier Viktor) Chernomyrdin has not realised this. But Chernomyrdin's chances at election are slim."

Luzhkov's however are not. The latest Public Opinion Foundation poll showed 17 per cent of respondents said they would vote him as president, a high number in a country frustrated with politics in general.

He is just points behind Communist Party boss Gennady Zyuganov. Many believe that Luzhkov, whose ideology has shown to be a mixed back of nationalism and go-slow economic reform, is the strongest coalition candidate in the running.

Russia's Constitutional Court is currently going through the motions to determine whether Yeltsin is qualified to seek re-election in 2000. But Kremlin contenders are watching the proceedings with a smirk — 1 per cent of Russians today say they will ever vote for Yeltsin again.

Some, however, predict that while Luzhkov has made a name of himself on Moscow, his popularity will burst as quickly as Russia's economic crisis makes its impact on the capital.

"Luzhkov's trump card is the blossoming capital... built on banks and oil and gas dollars that have settled there," said the Izvestia daily in a commentary Friday.

"But all of that ended in August and Moscow has to learn to live just like the rest of the country — poorly," the paper said. "These are the facts that all of the exceedingly impatient successors must remember."

Man charged with diverting animal drug for street sales

NEW YORK (AP) — A former New York resident and United Nations administrative assistant has been indicted for obtaining large quantities of an animal anaesthetic — increasingly used as a recreational drug — never shipped it out of the country as promised.

Kyle Baxter Utley was arrested in Los Angeles on 38 counts in the indictment returned Thursday in U.S. District Court in Manhattan. The charges included conspiracy, bank fraud, mail fraud and wire fraud.

The indictment alleged that over a five-year period, he obtained Ketamine Hydrochloride, a drug used by veterinarians to immobilise cats and monkeys. He claimed it would be used on mountain gorillas in Africa.

The drug, sold on the street as "Special K," has a growing popularity at "rave" parties, according to a release from the Drug Enforcement Administration. Snorted, injected, smoked and mixed in drinks, it affects the senses in a way similar to PCP or LSD, the DEA said.

It costs veterinarians about $7 a vial but sells on the street for between $100 and $200 a vial, the DEA said.

Prosecutors alleged Utley falsely represented that the drug would be used for a project involving mountain gorillas in Rwanda.

According to the indictment, Utley developed a relationship in 1995 with Dr. James Foster, a veterinarian licensed by the state of Washington. Foster was project director of the Morris Animal Foundation's Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project, an independent organisation engaged in monitoring the health of mountain gorilla's in Rwanda and other African countries.

Prosecutors said Utley obtained Foster's veterinary license number by telling him that he was interested in mountain gorilla conservation and by promising donations of animal medical supplies.

Utley then allegedly opened an account at a Texas-based veterinarian supply house and from September 1995 through July 1996 bought more than 23,000 vials of the drug.

But instead of shipping it to Rwanda, he sent it to addresses in New York City, prosecutors said.

The indictment also charged Utley with two separate schemes.

In one, he allegedly defrauded the Iowa-based AUSA Life Insurance Co. of $136,000 in annuity policies bought by an elderly woman by falsely representing that he had obtained power of attorney. In the second, he allegedly engaged in bank fraud to pocket another $17,500.

If convicted of bank fraud, the most serious charge, Utley could face up to 30 years in prison and a $1 million fine.

Women don't make agents, says Russian spy teacher

MOSCOW (R) — The head of Russia's spy school says he has trouble recruiting would-be agents these days but still draws the line at selecting women to work in the field.

Lieutenant-General Nikolai Gribin of the Foreign Intelligence Academy also said in Friday's edition of the newspaper Izvestia that applicants routinely face a lie detector test.

Izvestia said its correspondent Gennady Charodeyev was the first reporter to visit Gribin's academy since it was founded in 1938. Charodeyev said the academy was hidden away in a forest outside Moscow and known to agents as the "School in the Woods".

"Those who want to link their fate to intelligence work should be under no illusions," Gribin said. "Our students are paid about the same as a junior officer in the armed forces."

"The intelligence service cannot exist outside society. If the country has a fever our service shivers too," Gribin said, referring to economic ills that have drained Russia of funds.

"Of course we have trouble in selecting recruits to train at the academy. Our specialists in the personnel department of the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) note that it is difficult to find young people with an appreciable experience of life."

Gribin said he looked for fit people aged between 22 and 35 with higher education, language aptitude and analytical skills.

Asked whether it was true women had been trained at the academy to work abroad, Gribin said: "Possibly, before my time.

"My personal view is that because of physiological and psychological peculiarities it is difficult for women to work in intelligence. However, it is well known Western intelligence uses representatives of the weaker sex."

Ironically, Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, who headed the SVR before becoming foreign minister, said in an interview in 1995 he favoured deploying more women as operational agents.

Jordan Times

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Odds in favour of deal

IT MAY appear that the odds are now in favour of a deal emerging from the four-day summit between Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu and U.S. President Bill Clinton at Wye Plantation in Maryland. It would be naive to believe that the two sides have been invited by the U.S. to a marathon summit without a solid basis for a breakthrough. It can also be presumed that a complete news blackout will be observed on all essential stages of the summit until the two parties clinch a deal.

But the principal issue remaining is not whether the Israeli and Palestinian leaders strike a deal or not on paper. We have seen how even the Oslo accords ended up becoming dead letters for all intents and purposes under the strains of implementation and Israeli determination to rewrite them altogether. There is now a genuine fear that once again while the two antagonists may agree on paper, the implementation stage would further be delayed with no real relief in sight for the Palestinians.

This is not to mention the fact that anything Netanyahu agrees to will have to be endorsed by his cabinet and the Israeli Knesset in due course. This could prove to be another arduous path that could offer Israeli hard-liners yet another opportunity to destroy what the projected Wye Plantation accords might conclude. We say this despite the declared commitment of the Labour opposition party to vote in favour of the expected agreement. Notwithstanding the appointment of Ariel Sharon as Israel's new foreign minister, the extremists in the Jewish state appear determined to undermine anything their premier would put his seal of approval on.

Clinton is putting his full weight behind the peace talks. The U.S. president is also banking on their success. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is also placing her full clout behind the efforts to arrive at an agreement. As a matter of fact, the entire international community is rallying on the side of peace between the Israelis and Palestinians. This puts the onus on the Israeli extremists to show more wisdom in pronouncing themselves on the current endeavours to move the stalled peace process forward.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek said educating public opinion should be the real aim of any dialogue. Thus, the accurate standard to judge political dialogue, for example, is the audience. The tools for dialogue are available in the media, but the most dangerous thing about this media "dialogue," said Fanek, is that some people do not know how to direct such dialogues, which need neutral judges and clever audiences. It is not true that a dialogue aims at finding common interests or calling for national unity, because such goals are far off, the writer claimed, and will come as a result of democracy. Unfortunately, calling for dialogue, as an alternative to struggle, usually means convincing people of others' opinions, what Fanek called "deaf dialogue."

Al Dustour's editorial praised Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh's recent visit to Egypt, saying it showed how much the two countries are concerned about the upcoming summit in the U.S. There is no doubt that Amman and Cairo have made a lot of active diplomatic efforts to overcome obstacles facing negotiations on the Palestinian track, the editorial said. The joint Jordanian-Egyptian position regarding the region's issues was declared after Tarawneh's meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who stressed the two countries' position concerning the peace process. Tarawneh's visit showed how Jordan is aware of dangers that could affect the Middle East peace process, said the editorial.

Jordanian Perspective

Dr. Musa Keilani

Will they see the light of reason?

ALL EYES are pinned on that graceful mansion in the middle of Wye Plantation in Maryland with hope that the Middle East peace talks will produce a major breakthrough. U.S. President Bill Clinton has thrown his full weight behind the negotiations, but he also asserted that it is up to Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to arrive at a formula to lift the logjam over the U.S. compromise proposal over an Israeli redeployment in the West Bank. While we cannot differ in principle with that assertion, the realities on the ground tell us that if anyone should be asked to come up with a formula then it should be Netanyahu rather than Arafat. Quite simply, it is not Arafat who is refusing to recognise the legitimate rights of the Israelis — he has already compromised enough and more of the rights of his own people. It is Netanyahu who, by sheer arrogance stemming from military might and the reality of physical control of territory, is refusing to accept the legitimate rights of the Palestinians. How could Clinton or any level-headed American administration official who believes in international legitimacy and justice expect Arafat to make more concessions? But that seems to be the case in Wye.

Assuming that the Wye discussions could possibly lead to accelerated final status talks, or even final status talks as some American and regional experts tend to believe, we cannot but raise certain fundamentals of the process so far and ask what could be the basis for optimism that the outcome will be based on justice for all.

What we have seen so far does not give us enough ground for such hopes. What we do fear is the imposition of a dictated solution down Palestinian throats, and that does indeed bode ill for the entire region.

We have seen that it was under a no-win situation dictated by the realities left behind by the Gulf crisis and Arafat's Israeli-fuelled fears that Hamas and Islamic Jihad were making headway into the core of Palestinian society that Fateh and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) accepted the Oslo agreements.

The accords themselves imposed firm limitations on Palestinian aspirations, whether in terms of regaining their legitimate territory, including Arab East Jerusalem, and allowing the return of Palestinians, refugees, displaced or otherwise. The agreements effectively sidelined key Arab players who could have strengthened the Palestinian negotiating position, and left the Palestinians to deal with the Israelis on their own. By definition, it meant that the negotiations were turned lopsided because they were between the occupied and the occupier. And, regardless of the change of political power in Israel, the pattern of the Oslo process since then had proved us right that it was not actually negotiations that were taking place.

It was simply an Israeli dictation of formulas and agreements clearly designed not only to dilute the legitimate political and territorial rights of the Palestinians, but also to deny them the core of everything that they hoped for when the peace process was launched in 1991.

Given that those negotiations and agreements which were concluded before the Israeli elections in 1996 were made with the so-called dovish Labour Party in the Israeli political scene, could we have expected anything better with the Likud-led government that followed the Labour-headed coalition? To be fair, we have heard, and we tend to believe it to a limited extent, that had Labour maintained power through the 1996 elections the Palestinians would not be finding themselves in the present dilemma that they face. Perhaps true. But what Arafat and the Palestinian nation he represents face today in Wye is not only the ultimate realisation of the truth that their aspirations for freedom and statehood are mirages but also an emphatic Israeli position that they had better accept what the Netanyahu is willing to give them — which means the continued status of a captive people living in captive territory who can run their municipal, education and health affairs in isolated population centres while also serving as a captive market for the products of the captor.

That is not the Oslo agreements envisaged. In principle, the agreements projected a fair and just process of negotiations on the technical modalities to arrive at an agreement which would be based on respect for the rights of the occupied people.

As such, what we are witnessing today is a mockery of the very concept of negotiations, whether diplomatic, technical or otherwise. The only ray of hope rests with the mediator in the process, the United States.

What we are anxious to find out is whether President Clinton can rise to the occasion and not only lean on Israel, but also apply real pressure to force Netanyahu and Sharon see the light of reason.

Out of Order

Brian Brown

The need for action

THE CURRENT crisis that is undermining and destroying the economies of countries around the world has a large number of people worried. The number of firings and lay-offs, or as the British euphemism goes, redundancies, has workers everywhere wondering if they'll be able to make a living in a month or two. Small businesses, faced with the increasingly common sight of giant multinationals merging into even larger conglomerates, try to figure out how they're going to compete. Scientific researchers and NGOs see government funding becoming leaner and leaner. Stock market traders from Tokyo to London wake up each morning and look to the last economic stronghold left, New York, praying that the bastion hasn't fallen.

Wall Street, it seems, is in a situation similar to the defence of Rome's gates against the barbarian horde, but instead of such names as Visigoth, Goth and Vandal, the new foes include Devalued Yen, Collapsed Rouble and Fluctuating Franc. All that stands between capitalism's golden era and a looming dark age is one little street in downtown New York. However, in the back of everyone's minds, there must be knowledge of the fact that Rome did fall and that no defence is impenetrable. This certainly cannot be a pleasant thought for the people at the bottom of the chain, whose livelihoods depend on the profits of those above them.

But the *real* losers of this crisis, it seems, will be the wealthy and privileged. You may not believe me but it's true. The other day at about 4:30 in the morning, I turned on the television at the house where I was staying (following a move from my old apartment due to financial considerations — being a columnist at the paper doesn't guarantee housing or a healthy sleep pattern!) and saw a CNBC report on how stock brokers and Wall Street lawyers can no longer afford $10,000 bottles of 1870 Chateau or $500 lunches. This scene moved me greatly. I used to think that such waste was unforgivable considering the millions of people living in poverty in the U.S. alone, but now I can clearly see that I was wrong. The welfare and comfort of the people running the businesses that provide for all of our wants and needs must be maintained at all costs. Therefore, if for no other end, I urge everyone to take immediate corrective action to solve this pernicious crisis as soon as possible.

The wealthy, however, aren't the only ones in trouble — politicians around the globe are also feeling the heat. Several governments, including those of Japan and Indonesia, have already fallen due to either incompetence in handling the crisis or massive corruption at a time when it is no longer able to be overlooked. These shortcomings are fine as long as people are able to buy expensive foreign property, German-made cars and the necessities of life, such as rice, or when the so-called "Asian values" were the talk in European and American business circles. Times have changed, however, and when things start going wrong and millions of people cannot buy food for their families, they start looking for an accounting of the situation.

This is sometimes easier said than done. A good example of the problems involved with accountability, transparency, or simply getting a straight answer were highlighted in a Reuters report yesterday under the headline "Indonesia bans U.S. analyst for insulting minister." What this uppity analyst did, apparently, was to suggest that the chosen head of an anti-corruption campaign might not be suitable because of unanswered questions over an "irregular" business transaction. In an interesting reaction, he has been banned from entering the country and, presumably, from offering advice to help Indonesia out of its mire. So the message Indonesia is sending, and one that a number of countries have already adopted, is kill the messenger. If there is a problem, ignore it and hope it goes away. Discussing thorny issues will only make things worse. But perhaps there is an advantage to keeping a questionable figure who has uninvestigated allegations floating around him in charge of an anti-corruption campaign that I have overlooked.

It is obvious that matters have reached a serious stage now that those in powerful positions most adequate to deal with this global economic crisis are being forced out by conditions beyond their control. They've done a lot of good things that cannot be disparaged. Sure, there are some unsolved challenges: widespread starvation in Sudan, rampant disease in Bangladesh, the threat of war looming over the Middle East and Central Asia, and other such matters. But these problems should provide an even greater incentive to tighten our belts and make sure that progress can continue unimpeded. If we succeed in the task of salvaging and strengthening the existing institutions and system, the benefits will trickle down to us sooner or later.

RECOMMENDED READING: Catch-22, by Joseph Heller. A fantastic deal? There is only one catch, and that is Catch-22. The novel's main character, Yossarian, a U.S. Army air force bombardier in WWII, battles against a network of absurd regulations and rules in his quest to be sent home from combat. Catch-22, a powerful anti-war book, doesn't shy away from either humorous or horrific subjects, many times combining the two in a very effective emotional manner. This should be required reading for those considering a military career.

LETTERS

Consideration, please

To the editor:

THANKS TO Dr. Gharaibeh for his courageous letter, (Jordan Times, Oct. 12, 1998) concerning the noise pollution in our country.

I agree in every point, he hits the nail on the head in every way, especially in saying, that nobody takes the slightest notice of the continuous noise.

To live at a traffic light and next door to a mosque, well, you can imagine.

Just let me ask one more question: The broadcasting of the Friday sermons is in one way understandable considering the big number of worshippers (even if the intensity of sound could be reduced) — but what sense does it make to broadcast the prayer five times a day?

Even in times of sickness, tawjihi etc. requests for stopping them was almost useless.

Mr. Gharaibeh mentioned the distress loudspeakers make for children, the sick and elderly. What about people who have to make up for sleep because of night work like doctors, pharmacists and many others?

I'm not as courageous as Mr. Gharaibeh to ask for the removal of electronic equipment from mosques — just a simple request to be more thoughtful, at least to reduce the volume of the loudspeakers, the use of car horns, in order to spare people the trouble we had — moving, or more accurately, escaping from our home.

H. Else Wilhelm Suber,
Amman.

A beautiful euphony

To the editor:

AS A convert to Islam, I was surprised, indeed shocked, by Dr. Abdul Wahab Gharaibeh's Letter to the Editor (Jordan Times, October 12) in which he complained about "noise pollution" and the "unintelligible cacophony" of the Aa'than.

I might well understand the honking of cars to be a source of irritation, but I would like to remind Dr. Gharaibeh that in many heavily populated cities of the world, such reaction to traffic congestion (the honking of horns) is typical. However, honking cars and the Aa'than are two entirely different things. First of all, the very term "pollution" signifies the following: Making emotionally impure or unclean, defiling, befouling, dirtying, or contaminating the environment. What Dr. Gharaibeh may find as pollution, others may find as soothing, relaxing, inviting, and reassuring. Whenever I travel outside a Muslim country, hearing the Aa'than is one of the things I miss most.

To also call the Aa'than "unintelligible cacophony" adds insult to injury. Even to a non-native speaker of Arabic, such as myself, the Aa'than is very intelligible, an invitation to pray and a reminder the faithful that they are obligated to perform their prayers five times a day as an indication of their steadfastness in this life and also to prepare for life after death.

My mother-in-law is quite elderly, yet she looks forward to the "fajr" Aa'than, especially since she would not know how to set an alarm clock and otherwise would not know when to get up to pray before dawn. I have had infants, many of them, who very successfully slept through all early morning calls to prayer. My neighbour had a stroke recently, but he rejoices when he hears the call of the Aa'than and finds it not at all disturbing. I find it strange that "devout" Dr. Gharaibeh minds the sound of the Aa'than or talks about it as being a thing of the ancient past when there were no alarm clocks. Islam is not a religion of the past only, but a living religion that encompasses the past, present and future. Some people have been converted to Islam because of the Aa'than and other foreigners love it even though they are non-Muslim.

A sermon is a religious discourse with the intention of not only enriching, but informing the congregation. I remember being a child listening to church sermons and how these sermons were structured around what was going on in my former society and the world as well. That sermons in local mosques here talk about Zionism, Israel, Imperialism, and America, among other topics, is not really strange at all, since these are some very basic concerns of every Jordanian citizen, whether Christian or Muslim.

In addition, it is a bit inconceivable how Dr. Gharaibeh found time to count how many times various words were used in the sermon he mentioned and concentrate too.

What I keep wondering is how can anyone call themselves "devout" and still mind hearing the Aa'than. What disturbs me also is that Dr. Gharaibeh seems to have been "infected" with a bit of Western Imperialism himself. What he may define as antiquated and unnecessary, others will define as a vital part of Muslim life today and tomorrow and a beautiful euphony to "devout" ears.

Ruth Anderson,
Amman.

Domestic issues and peace process dominate headlines

Reviewed by Ahmad Khatib

Week in Print

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek said in order to solve unemployment, reasons behind the problem have to be identified. Among these factors, the writer said, is the continuity of coercive and voluntary emigration to Jordan from the occupied West Bank and the Gulf states. This has increased the population by 1.4 per cent in addition to the normal increase of 2.6 per cent. The ordinary economic growth cannot meet that rise in population, especially with the Kingdom's limited natural resources. On the other hand, the number of foreign labour, which strongly competes with local labour, is higher than Jordan needs, Fanek said. According to the writer, inflexible salaries, the retreat of the agricultural sector — which can provide many job opportunities, the drop in economic activity and investments since 1982 and the closure of Iraqi and Palestinian markets for Jordanian goods have also helped create unemployment. Some reasons, such as the lack of natural resource, are beyond our control, but others can be affected by government policy. In order to solve the unemployment problem, the government should help get rid of the above mentioned factors, concluded Fanek.

Al Dustour's Abdul Majid Jradat said the appointment of Ariel Sharon as minister of foreign affairs was designed to satisfy Israel's right-wing extremists and contradict Palestinian and Arab interests in order to serve Jewish goals. It is a good chance for Sharon to achieve what he wants, especially with the Syrian-Turkish situation, which no doubt will serve Israel, the writer said. On the Israeli-Palestinian track, negotiations will continue to be negative, especially as Arab coordination continues to be fragmented, Jradat said. Sharon, who was a former agriculture minister, is "an experienced aggressive fighter," who is aware of how to take advantage of the fragile situation in the Arab World, said the writer.

Al Ra'i's Osama Tleilan commented on recent Syrian announcements against Jordan, saying it is strange to make such statements at a time when Syria needs all the Arab support it can get to face Turkey. Jordan is one of the most active parties working to solve the Syrian-Turkish crisis. He asked what possible aims such statements could have, and whether they were an attempt to avaluate the Kingdom's foreign policy motives. Despite the fact that that Jordan does not have the capability to impose its solutions, it has the ability to play an active diplomatic role in order to solve regional problems.

The Kingdom's relation with Turkey was created for Arab benefit, and improving this relation is the best way to avoid any Israeli-Turkish alliance.

Al Dustour's Mazen Saket said reducing Jordan's water shortage, estimated at 55 per cent, more than the water that is being supplied, has to be among the government's highest priorities. He added that issues like finding non-traditional water resources, strategic solutions for transferring water from the Disi aquifer and desalinating sea water do not adequately address ways of renewing water networks. Water shortage are also caused by network leakage and illegal usage of water. At a time when Jordan needs every single drop of water, more than 25 per cent of water leaks are caused by inadequate piping, which must be repaired urgently. According to Saket, reducing this percentage to 15 per cent would save 15 million cubic metres of water. In order to find a solution for the water shortage, the writer urged the government to implement such repair-work as soon as possible.

Al Ra'i's Mahmoud Rimawi praised U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's efforts for trying to implement U.N. resolutions related to Iraq. Annan recently asked the U.N. to prove that Iraq still have mass destruction weapons and asked if Iraq's current situation allows it to form a threat to the region. The secretary general did this after the international community, except for the U.S. and the U.K., have understood that the sanctions imposed on Iraq were not meant to be a seemingly endless measure, said the writer. In addition, there are many doubts about the political behaviour of some UNSCOM members, who, according to the writer, have been in contact with Israel in a way that could weaken the commission's neutrality and credibility. Iraq now has a chance to cooperate with Amman and the U.N., said Rimawi.

So much for conventional wisdom about market rule

William Greider is the author of "One World, Ready or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism."

OFFICIAL WASHINGTON is slowly awakening to the storm, but its fainthearted response ensures that this global unravelling will become far more severe before governments find the will to confront it decisively.

We are not yet at a worldwide depression like the one that unfolded from 1929 to 1933 — not yet. But leaders in government, business and finance are committing the same basic error of judgement. Hubris, plus their weak grasp of economic history, blinds many smart and powerful people to the gathering dangers.

Authorities cling wishfully to the reigning free market orthodoxy as it breaks down before their eyes. The proposition that utterly unregulated markets rule society more wisely than sovereign governments is being smashed by reality.

Most members of the U.S. Congress seem oblivious to the economic portents and vast suffering in other nations. They will be shaken awake shortly. The American economy is sinking toward recession, perhaps in the next six to nine months. A lot of Americans are about to *lose their jobs and homes, maybe* savings, too. The recent prosperity did not prepare them for this. Rising unemployment will collide with the extraordinary levels of personal debt.

A shrinking U.S. economy is ominous for larger reasons. It intensifies the deflationary pressures that have already collapsed so many other nations. And it closes off their best route of recovery — selling exports to a vibrant *American market. Thus, nations will lunge at* more self-defensive actions: Devaluing currencies, closing borders to imports, cutting loose from the global system.

President Bill Clinton stands a fair risk of becoming a "New Democrat" version of Herbert Hoover. Like Hoover, Clinton entrusted his economic policy to conservative financial experts (in his case, Robert Rubin and Alan Greenspan). He is captive to their narrow, cautious view of what is unfolding.

We are in a historic watershed that upends conventional wisdom — starting with how the global system operates and how we think about it.

The first imperative is to reverse the deflation before it swallows up more major economies. The pivotal policy question is the choice of priorities.

Governments need to recognise that they must focus, first and primarily, on rescuing the real economy of production and consumption from further deterioration — instead of concentrating only on financial markets and banking systems.

A central lesson from the Great Depression was that bankers and investors are not going to get well until the producers and consumers get well.

Restoring economic growth must come first. To reverse recessionary forces, governments can do quite a lot — pumping hard on the demand side worldwide and suspending the usual rules for orderly finance and bank lending.

These solutions sound far-fetched to the present generation of politicians, since they were taught to keep their hands off the marketplace.

To grasp the nature of this crisis, think of three separate deflationary currents surging around the world, viciously reinforcing each other.

The first is the abrupt collapse of inflated financial assets (failed loans, investments, stock prices). The deflating financial bubble generates the second surge — the falling demand for goods, which injures producers and wage earners.

The third current is the most dangerous: The psychology of spreading fear. Once people get really scared (consumers, business managers, bankers), they may hunker down in self-defence: Stop buying and borrowing, stop lending and producing. Once people no longer believe any pronouncements from exports, everything can freeze up. Japan is a living example.

It would help public confidence if leaders started talking straight about the situation. Yes, some people will run out and dump stocks, but they seem to be getting the word anyway.

A quick list of what governments ought to do now:

• Stimulate real economic activity on many fronts. Cut interest rates significantly, but also prepare the political ground for a quick, emergency tax cut that puts more money in paycheques of working people who will spend it promptly.

• Halt the widening squeeze on available credit. Nervous bankers around the world are pulling back from trouble, cutting off business lines of credit, rejecting new loans for developing nations. But this makes everything worse. Regulators and central banks must lean hard on banks and brokerages to keep credit flowing. Lending can be encouraged by temporarily relaxing capital standards and reserve requirements.

• Switch the lending objectives of the IMF from financial disorders to economic stimulus. This requires new IMF leaders — pro-growth business executives from around the world who understand the necessity of re-liquefying failing companies and economies. A new IMF could create a global version of FDR's Reconstruction Finance Corporation that imposes reasonable workouts between firms and creditors.

• Restrain the destabilising adventures of global finance. Banks and hedge funds can be whacked by higher margin requirements on lending for financial speculation. Poorer nations (and ultimately major economies) need the right to prudential controls on capital flows to disarm the "hot money."

In all these areas, governments possess enormous power over the marketplace, if they will decide to use it.

A new Bretton Woods agreement would devise a moderating version of capital controls and a more stable system for currency relationships. It would investigate such suspect matters as the wholesale tax avoidance practised by global corporations and financiers.

But a new Bretton Woods must ask larger questions. Why do the terms of trade protect property rights but not human rights or the rights of workers to organise in their own self-interest? Why does the global system ignore the random inhumanities in its own factories? Or the deepening inequalities of wealth and incomes that helped to generate this crisis?

A new Bretton Woods understanding, in other words, cannot be left to the bankers and economists.

— International Herald Tribune

Regional

Satirical film jabs at U.S influence

By Howard Schneider

LEONARDO DICAPRIO may be the latest screen idol elsewhere, but here in this Arab capital it is a clown-faced, balding 36-year-old who is breaking box office records. By the end of Mohammad Heneidi's low-budget satire, American totems from Michael Jackson to market capitalism have been skewered with sarcasm and the Israeli flag has been tattered and burned.

Egyptian audiences love the film. Since its release during the summer, Heneidi's wittily subversive portrayal of a Saidi, a rural southern Egyptian, attending the mostly upper-class American University in Cairo has produced long lines and standing-room-only ticket sales at theatres throughout the country.

Although its several millions of dollars in earnings have made it one of the highest-grossing Arabic-language films, the real import of "Saidi at American University" may be what it says about Egyptian popular thinking at a time of high scepticism toward U.S. policy in the Middle East as well as Israeli policy and diplomatic tactics toward the Palestinians.

Disillusionment with both is nothing new in a region where issues as diverse as Princess Diana's death, Monica Lewinsky's Oval Office dalliances, the AIDS plague and terrorism are frequently cited as evidence of Jewish or U.S. conspiracies to undermine the Arab World.

Yet, in the face of difficult Israeli-Palestinian peace talks and U.S. cruise missile attacks against a chemical plant in Sudan and a suspected terrorism training camp in Afghanistan, Heneidi's film goes a step further. It blends broadly held perceptions that the 20-year-old Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty has produced few tangible benefits and a growing anxiety about American cultural and economic dominance.

The skewering is often light-hearted and aimed not so much at Americans as at Egyptians who try to emulate American ways — an affliction described as all too common within the privileged confines of the American University's downtown campus.

When Heneidi, to a catchy tune and hip-hop choreography, shops for a new wardrobe of American casual clothes, when he tries to ingratiate himself with a free-market-preaching, U.S.-passport-carrying professor, he plays it for laughs — and gets them.

In the case of Israel, however, the tone is darker, although the audience response is no less enthusiastic.

When, during a culminating scene, Heneidi's initially apolitical character sets fire to an Israeli flag during a demonstration, mimics a Nazi salute and dances on the burning banner, the response in theatres has often been applause.

"I never liked politics, but when I lit the flag I felt relief," Heneidi's character tells a policeman investigating the incident, who, in what passes for a quasi-official endorsement of the flag-burning, shakes the youth's hand and lets him go.

While the film's political themes run in tandem with a love story and abundant references to Egyptian family life, the political jabs are prominent enough to draw protests from the Israeli Embassy here and a lawsuit from the American University in Cairo.

The university backed off after the film's producer apologised for having failed to seek the school's approval for one scene that included its emblem.

The sensitivities of Israelis about the portrayal of their country in the Egyptian entertainment and information media have proved more enduring.

In mid-September, the Israeli government used the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Camp David accord for peace between Egypt and Israel to release a 14-page study of what it regards as an anti-Jewish bias in Egypt's state-controlled press.

It did not mention the movie but included a compendium of statements and cartoons from local papers. "Newspaper articles refer to Jews as swindlers and tricksters," said the report from Israel's Government Press Office.

Israel, it said, has been accused of spreading AIDS and other diseases in Arab countries and of attempting to foment civil war in Egypt.

It added that the Egyptian media had sought to implicate Israel in a mass shooting of tourists in Luxor. *That prompted the Egyptian* foreign minister, Amr Musa, to accuse Israel of trying to intimidate Egypt in the defence of its interests in the region and to divert attention from the stalled Israeli negotiations with the Palestinians.

"We are all angry, and we are all frustrated," Mr. Musa said.

That much can be heard in the reaction of those who have flocked to see Mr. Heneidi's film and absorbed its message on identity and cultural independence.

By the end of the movie, Mr. Heneidi's character has gone from being "in awe of America" to delivering an emotional commencement speech dedicated to his father and traditional Egyptian values.

That, said Intessar Ahmad Mohammad, is a message all Egyptians should take to heart. After watching the movie one recent afternoon with a friend, she said she felt Americans "want you to think and act like them" and that they use institutions such as the American University to spread U.S. influence.

"It's all right to get an education and technology," she said, but after too much exposure to American ways, "many start to lose their Arabic language and other aspects of their culture."

— International Herald Tribune

'What did you do during the war?'

Ilene R. Prusher

FOR A PAIR of teenagers, Rawan and Dima Damen have a lot of friends who are well into their 50s and 60s.

That's because six years ago, when most of the Damens' peers were spending their summer vacations playing in the yard and watching TV, Rawan and Dima, now 18 and 16, were combing Palestinian towns and villages for refugees who were forced to flee when they, too, were just children, during the war of 1948.

The result is their book — published in Arabic last year in Jordan — of 25 profiles of Palestinians who were evicted or fled from their villages. Setting out to hear the stories of children — who accounted for about half of the 800,000 refugees — all of their interview subjects were between the ages of 8 and 14 at the time of the war.

Now, "Expulsion in the Memory of Children" is being sponsored for republishing by the Palestinian Committee for Education, Culture and Science, with funding from the Arab branch of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation). The two were asked to give lectures in Ramallah on their research at Palestinian events marking the 50th anniversary of the "Nakbeh" — the Catastrophe. Rawan, who just completed her first year as a sociology student at Bir Zeit University, and Dima, who will be joining her sister in the fall as a computer science major, may be the youngest Arab women ever to meet with such literary success.

This was not even their first endeavour. When they were aged 10 and 12 and living in Jordan, they were unhappy with the fact that all of the children's books they read were written by adults.

So they decided to do something about it. In looking for a topic, they chose to focus on what life was like when their grandparents were children. They asked the kinds of questions you might expect from a child: What kinds of games did they play? What did their villages look like? The product of that early research was a shorter book entitled "The Days of Palestinian Children before 1948," which was published in the Kingdom in 1994.

During an interview in the family's home in a stylish new Ramallah apartment building, the two take turns expressing themselves with only a trace of sibling rivalry, at once competing and cooperating with each other in intelligence.

"At that time, we didn't even know what oral history was," Rawan snickers self-deprecatingly of their first book. A few years wiser at 12 and 14, the girls undertook a more serious project when the family returned to the West Bank in 1994. The result was the latest book.

"We began reading a lot about oral history techniques," says Rawan. They decided that they would again stick to what they could best relate to — children, or at least, the memories of childhood. "This was a more scientific work because we put some analysis into the effects on children," she says. They tried to assess the psychological effects of the expulsion on children, while keeping in mind the difficulties of asking someone to remember what happened 50 years earlier as a child.

Armed with a tape recorder, they began looking for subjects by asking randomly for people who were refugees from 1948. "We went out on the streets and asked people in the markets," says Dima, "and eventually we'd find people to talk to."

Their parents encouraged the research, carried out over the summer vacations, but the idea and its realisation were wholly theirs. Their father, Jamal Damen, an engineer, often helped out by dropping them off at a village where they had an interview and picking them up at the end of the day.

But the degree of independence afforded to the two, commensurate with their maturity but atypical for most young girls in Arab society, was sometimes confusing for their would-be subjects.

"Some people thought, 'It's just two little girls. They can't be serious,'" recalls Rawan. "Some people let us in, and some closed the doors."

Once they made their way inside, they found the work harder than expected. Some of the subjects broke down and cried. After the third interview, they decided to stop working. A week later, they came to the conclusion that the work was too important to give up, and resolved to continue.

"You're hearing a sad story, but you can't cry because the interviewee is already crying, and if you start, too, it will be a disaster," says Dima, with an apparently intuitive understanding of what professional interviewers would call detachment.

Their approach left a deep impression on their interview subjects. "I was overwhelmed by their ability and their human capability," says Audeh Rantisi, an Anglican priest in Ramallah who was forced to leave Lod when he was 11. "I was very touched that girls at such a young age were really interested and concerned with my story and with the Palestinian dilemma," Rantisi adds. "This reflects on their home. The Damen family is exemplary because they gave their daughters an opportunity to understand and excel."

The Damens themselves were not refugees. The family, originally from a prominent Nablus clan, moved to Jordan in the 1970s and then to Ramallah four years ago, when their father changed jobs. In addition to Rawan and Dima, Jamal and Rima Damen have a young son in grade school.

At the end of each interview, the Damens always asked about making peace with Israel. "They said, 'we are ready to live in peace with the Israelis, but that is apart from our own homes and lands,'" Dima says, recalling what she found to be the most difficult to understand in the older generation.

"We asked them, 'when did you realise that you will not return?' And they said, 'Who said we will not return?' We found that very strange. They have in their minds that their rights are so holy, that they can forgive everything, but that the most important thing is that they return to their homes." Homes, she duly notes, that may either no longer be there, or may have someone else living in them.

The Damens want their book to help raise consciousness of Palestinian history among both Arabs and Israelis, something they think is grossly lacking. "Israelis don't know this history, and Palestinians don't know the other side of the story either," says Rawan.

They also hope their book will be translated into Hebrew. The two, who studied the language in Ramallah, say that on the basis of what they read and know about Israelis, they don't doubt it would be read.

The fact that there has been increased interest in their book around the time of the 50th anniversary of the Nakbeh is not the most important thing as far as Rawan is concerned.

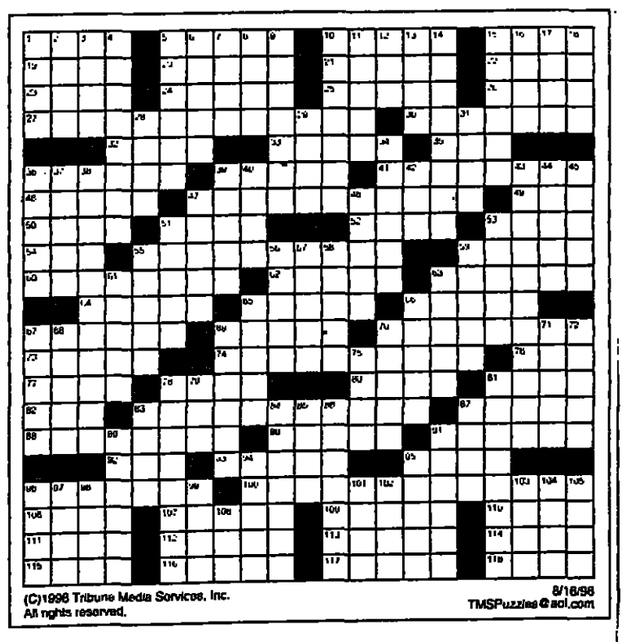
"This event will not change things in itself, only people can change things," she says. "We hope the next generation can build, work and look at things more clearly," she says with an analytical coolness beyond her years. "Now is the time to be more practical. OK, so it is a half-century. But what do you plan to do for the next half-century?"

— The Jerusalem Post

The Saturday Crossword

FAMILY AFFAIR

By Edgar Fontaine, Dighton, Massachusetts



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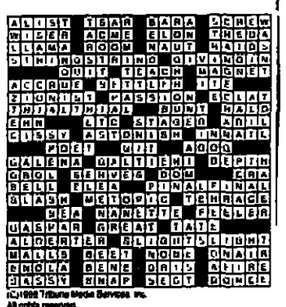
8/16/98 TMSPuzzles@aol.com

ACROSS

1 Taxis
5 Typefaces
10 Metric units
15 Rescue
19 Baldwin brother
20 "Murder in the Cathedral" dramatist
21 Make alterations
22 Part of OED
23 Docking place
24 Co-star of "Rebel Without a Cause"
25 Opening bars
26 Bygone
27 Garth Brooks hit
30 Opie's guardian
32 Be dull
33 Passing with flying colors
35 Draw
38 Neighbor of Zimbabwe
39 Storage film, briefly
41 Constructors
46 Ancient Greek silver coins
47 Nursery rhymes character
49 Baby's seat?
50 Network of vessels
51 Painter Chagall
52 Mine entrance
53 Icelandic saga
54 Collegiate cheer
55 Stern adviser
59 *On the up-and-up*
60 Egg dish, British style
62 Window elements
63 Fisher of "Star Wars"
64 Track events
65 __-Martin (vintage racing car)
66 Golan Heights claimant
67 Avoids duty
69 Vote in
70 Sapped
73 Suspends
74 Overprotective persons
76 Patriotic grp.
77 __ of Man
78 Country bumpkin
80 Assists
81 Transition point
82 RR depot
83 Vicki Lawrence sitcom
87 Australian marsupial
88 Resident of Maui
90 Comment to the audience
91 Less hair
92 Twice DLXXV
93 Miniature race cars
95 Indonesian island
96 Kidder movie
100 Main/Kilbride film
106 Needy
107 Having paddles
109 Get up
110 Gardener, at times
111 Dancer Pavlova
112 Entertainment venue
113 Manufacturer
114 Hostelries
115 Chore
116 "__ Longlegs"
117 Coarse variety of corundum
118 Relinquish

DOWN

1 Li'l Abner's creator
2 Inter __ (among other things)
3 Answering-machine signal
4 Board game with tiles
5 Thighbones
6 Martini garnish
7 Hall a golf course
8 Hammered on a slant
9 Belly
10 Covered with more soot
11 French historian
12 Rear of the space shuttle
13 Actress Sorvino
14 Most stalwart
15 Group of seven
16 Part of U.A.E.
17 Um
18 Back end of a kitchen?
28 Lane of the Daily Planet
29 Suffer heartbreak
31 French Riviera resort
34 Crystal-filled rocks
36 "The Mark of __"
37 Nautical position
38 '60s hit by Ernie K-Doe
39 Coerce
40 Hankering
42 King of France
43 Bourbon brand
44 Wheel spokes
45 Sudden flow
47 Dillon and McCoy
48 Greek physician
51 Muffles
53 Spooky
55 Sets of cards
56 Underdog's win
57 Slangy of course
58 $100 bill
59 Escapades
61 Expansive
63 Greenish blues
65 African succulents
66 Squalid
67 __ kebab
68 "__ la vista, baby!"
69 Build a levee
70 In the meantime
71 Two under par
72 Dismal in poetry
75 Sudden attack
78 Brook no delay
79 Actress Thurman
81 Postulated earliest period of human culture
83 "Of __ and Men"
84 Electromagnetic induction man
85 Nick and Nora's pooch
86 Identify incorrectly
87 Hardy cabbage
89 U.S train system
91 Pastry palace
94 Remedy
95 More dishonorable
96 Tiff
97 One of the Inner Hebrides
98 Chips off the old block
99 Poet Teasdale
101 1/16 ounce
102 Freshwater fish
103 Color variation
104 Allow to use
105 Scottish Gaelic
108 Burned by the sun



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To make an appointment for private consultations with Mr. Lloyd please contact our representative in Jordan, Mr. Ammar Salah at Tel.: 566 - 1948.

OUR FEES ARE REASONABLE & BASED ON RESULTS

Demand for Arab Bank shares reflected positively on the market — Naqeeb

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Despite a decline in the share prices of most of the firms in the Amman Financial Market (AFM) last week, the bourse's price index rose by 0.87 following a slight rise of Arab Bank's share prices, the AFM's weekly bulletin showed.

The improvement came one week after the stock market's price index recorded the lowest level in a year.

The bulletin indicated that shares at Arab Bank, the Kingdom's largest financial institution, jumped to JD207.5 from JD201.25.

"Demand for Arab Bank shares exceeded the supply, and thus the price increase. This development reflected positively in the market," Naim Naqeeb, a broker at the International Financial Centre, said.

"The increase in the price index occurred despite that 58 firms recorded price drops in the past week," the broker told the Jordan Times.

He noted shares of "some" firms recorded a historic decline, especially the Jordan Phosphate Company and some pharmaceutical firms.

The weekly bulletin showed that turnover amounted to JD4 million, compared to JD3.6 million, or 11.1 per cent increase over the previous week, with a daily trading of JD800,000 compared to JD700,000.

The industrial sector ranked first with a turnover of JD1.5 million, or 37.5 per cent. A total of 26 firms witnessed share price drops, while trading focused on Arab Pharmaceutical Manufacturing, Arab Potash and Dar Al Dawa.

The services sector ranked second with JD1.2 million, or 30 per cent. Himeh Mineral and its new off-shoot, the Himeh Mineral (new) and the National Portfolio won the lion's share in this sector, with an 85 per cent of the turnover.

The stock market's general price index increased by 0.87 point, up to 163.96 points from 163.09. The banking and insurance sectors index jumped by 5.88 and 1.18 points respectively, while prices of industrial and services sectors decreased by 3.11 and 4.09 points respectively.

Of the 100 firms that changed hands in the stock market, 23 companies recorded price increases, 58 registered declines, while 19 others witnessed no price changes.

The organised market turnover amounted to JD3.5 million, compared to JD3.2 million in the previous week, while the parallel market share amounted to JD446.968 compared to JD364.680; Naqeeb said.

He pointed out that trading in the parallel market focused on Union Tobacco, the Export and Finance Bank and Namico.

Foreign firms call on Saudi to open energy doors

BEIRUT (R) — International oil companies' key executives on Tuesday urged Saudi Arabia to open its doors wider to foreign investors and predicted the kingdom's financial constraints would eventually lead to such a move.

"I do think they should. I think the reality is that the Saudis need foreign investment to further develop their oil and gas resources," said Larry Wheeler, vice president-Middle East for Shell Chemicals, an arm of Anglo-Dutch oil conglomerate Royal Dutch/Shell Group.

"I believe they will. I would expect that the opportunities would not be limited to just U.S. companies. Royal Dutch/Shell certainly wants to be part of that opportunity as well," he told Reuters on the sidelines of an oil and gas conference.

Possible investment openings in Saudi Arabia has been the burning issue in the minds of oil executives since Crown Prince Abdullah held a rare meeting with U.S. oil executives in the United States last month.

During the meeting, the prince did not promise access to any specific energy projects in Saudi Arabia, though he did ask the executives for ideas on how to improve the kingdom's oil-producing and drilling operations. Analysts and oil company officials think it likely that Saudi Arabia, which currently has two million barrels per day (bpd) of spare production capacity, is more likely to want companies' help in developing natural gas and power projects rather than seek outside involvement in strategically sensitive crude oil.

Saudi Arabia's crude earnings have been hit hard by weak oil prices and allowing more foreign investment in the energy sector would bring in additional funds and free up government spending.

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Russian economy programme seen ready by year's end

MOSCOW (R) — Russia will have a medium-term economic programme ready by the end of the year and the cabinet will determine priority measures by next Tuesday, Economy Minister Andrei Shapovalyants told RIA news agency Friday.

Finance Minister Mikhail Zadornov, quoted by Interfax, said the central bank had prepared its monetary programme and banking system restructuring plans to present at talks next week with an International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission.

The IMF mission is due to return to Moscow Tuesday.

"They have their proposals and we have ours," Zadornov said, adding that the proposals covered the end of this year and 1999.

The IMF has said it would not release further credits for Russia until an agreed economic programme is in place. The second $4.3 billion tranche of a multi-billion-dollar loan package announced this summer is being held up.

Shapovalyants said one of the priorities was to clear non-payments between enterprises. "We don't plan to nationalise anyone. The government does not intend to take away property or limit the activities of exporters," he added.

RIA quoted First Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Maslyukov as saying a list of priority measures was ready for consideration by a special working group but still needed to be finalised.

"If necessary, and if the government session next Friday does not manage to consider them, then a special cabinet meeting Monday, October 26, cannot be ruled out," he said.

Central banker sees easy Turkey adjustment to euro

ISTANBUL (R) — Turkey's central bank governor said Friday he expected the euro to find rapid acceptance in Turkey, reinforcing its close financial and economic links with Europe.

The major challenge faced by Europe in securing public acceptance of the single currency will to a certain extent be bypassed in Turkey, which is already well accustomed to foreign currency usage, Governor Gazi Ercel said.

"I don't see such a problem in Turkey because Turkish people have adapted to the use of foreign currency accounts, especially the German mark, over the last 20 years and will accept it quickly," he told a conference on the euro's impact.

The consequent reduction in transaction costs and removal of risk related to more volatile currencies would create incentives for direct financing in European capital markets, Ercel said.

"A deep, liquid and efficient financial market will be of great benefit in raising funds, not only for Turkey but for other emerging markets," he said.

The importance of Turkey's trade and tourism transactions with Europe will accelerate its embrace of the euro, he said.

EU countries accounted for 47 per cent of Turkish exports and 51 per cent of imports in 1997. The advent of an EU customs union in 1996 boosted ties forged by more than three million Turks *living in Europe*, mainly in Germany. Savings of Turkish workers at the central bank total 21 billion marks ($13 billion).

European currencies account for 40 per cent of Turkey's total external debt of $94 billion. Between May 1987 and May 1998 Turkey issued $15 billion in Eurobonds. Sixty per cent of Turkey's official reserves and 40 per cent of its foreign exchange deposits are in EU currencies.

Ercel said these factors will make direct investment in Turkey more attractive to European firms, which accounted for 70 per cent of direct foreign investments.

Alongside Turkey's long-term aim to enter the EU and the euro currency zone, work was already underway to secure the independence of the Turkish central bank, Ercel said.

The central bank is currently assessing the feasibility of connecting Turkey with the European cross-border settlement system TARGET, developed as part of the EMU process.

The Maastricht convergence criteria gave Turkey an important means of disciplining its economy and addressing the fundamental problems of high inflation and budget deficits, he added.

Foreign Minister Ismail Cem told the conference the euro would strenghten Ankara's often stormy political relationship with the EU as it would make the bloc more outward looking.

"The main worry with EU-Turkey relations was the lack of a strategic dimension," he told the conference. "The EU will gain a strategic dimension with monetary union, and I expect this to have a positive political impact Turkey."

REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates — Prices as at 16/10/98 3:26

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.6136	0.5849	1.3105	116.35	1.5376	1597.90	1.8206	5.4127
DE Mark	0.6197	-	0.3621	0.8123	72.03	0.9524	989.60	1.1280	3.3532
GB Sterling	1.7096	2.7606	-	2.2418	198.87	2.6287	2732.41	3.1132	9.2557
CH Franc	0.7631	123.00	0.4455	-	88.65	1.1727	1217.91	138.77	4.1255
JP Yen	0.0086	1.3860	0.5020	1.1255	-	1.3204	13.71	156.32	4.6475
CA Dollar	0.6504	1.2916	0.4225	1.0566	1.32	-	1270.80	1.4551	4.3265
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0104	0.3660	0.0821	1374.00	0.9626	-	11.40	3.3880
NL Guilder	0.5493	88.61	0.3211	71.99	63.89	0.8445	876.92	-	2.9723
FR Franc	0.1848	0.2983	0.1080	24.2300	21.49	0.2842	33.65	33.6500	-

Middle Eastern Currencies

Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7090	3.7475	0.3770	3.6399	0.2975	3.6728	1502.00	3.4025
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	-	5.2856	0.5317	5.1339	0.4196	5.1803	2118.48	4.7990
Saudi Riyal	0.2668	0.1892	-	0.1006	0.97	0.0794	0.98	400.80	0.9079
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8808	9.9411	-	9.66	0.7892	9.74	3984.40	9.0259
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	1.0296	1.0296	-	0.0817	1.01	412.65	0.9348
Kuwait Dinar	3.3613	2.3832	12.5966	1.2671	12.23	-	12.35	5048.74	0.9348
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0203	0.1026	0.9910	0.0810	-	408.95	0.9264
Lebanese/1000	0.67	0.4720	2.4950	0.2510	2.4234	0.1981	2.4453	-	2.2653
Egyptian	0.2939	0.2084	1.1014	0.1108	1.0698	0.0874	1.0794	441.44	-

Energy

Oils	Last	revious
Brent	0.00	0.00
W. Texas	14.05	14.05
Bonny	0.00	0.00
Dubai	11.60	12.36
UL Gas	142.00	142.00

Mid-East Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2668	0.4308	0.15609	0.34988	31.0742
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.43958	0.15926	0.357	31.7058
KW Dinar	3.3613	5.42594	1.96618	4.40723	391.389
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.28266	1.55159	3.47826	308.928
CY Pound	2.0869	3.3683	1.22	2.7353	242.811

Metal Prices

Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	299.25	299.75
Silver (oz's)	4.89	4.92
Platinum (oz's)	342.5	344.5
AL (3 Months)	1359	1362
CU (3 Months)	1623	1627
Zinc (3 Months)	957	962
Lead (3 Months)	498	503
NI (3 Months)	3875	3895

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)

Period / C'ncy	- 1 - Month	- 3 - Months	- 6 - Months	- 1 - Year
USD	5.4077	5.3433	5.1572	4.9081
GBP	7.4270	7.2725	7.0622	6.7881
JPY	0.3378	0.4014	0.4545	0.5027
DEM	3.5000	3.5933	3.5619	3.5000
FRF	3.5000	1.3258	1.4039	1.5000
CHF	1.2002	3.5605	3.5410	3.5195
ITL	4.9360	4.6460	4.1440	-

Main Equity Indices

Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls
NewYork	DOW JONES	8299.36	338.58	4.15	8347.76	7920.12	7968.78
Newyork	S&P 500	1047.49	41.96	4.17	1053.09	1000.12	1005.53
London	FT-SE 100	5056.3	17.9	0.36	5125.6	5011	5038.4
Tokyo	NIKKIE 225	13158.18	162.81	1.26	13273	13109.3	12995.4
Paris	CAC 40	3362.26	1.22	0.04	3422.45	3323.39	3361.04
Frankfurt	DAX	4399.05	80.53	1.86	4435.32	4320.64	4318.52

Energy

Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lbs)	105.75	Spot
Cocoa ($/ton)	1963	Spot
Sugar ($/ton)	222.7	Spot
Wheat ($/ton)	124	Spot
Soya (c/lbs)	24.81	Spot
Tea (stg/kg)	125	Spot
Barley ($/bsh)	0	Spot
Rice ($/ton)	395	Spot

* JOD Cross Rates

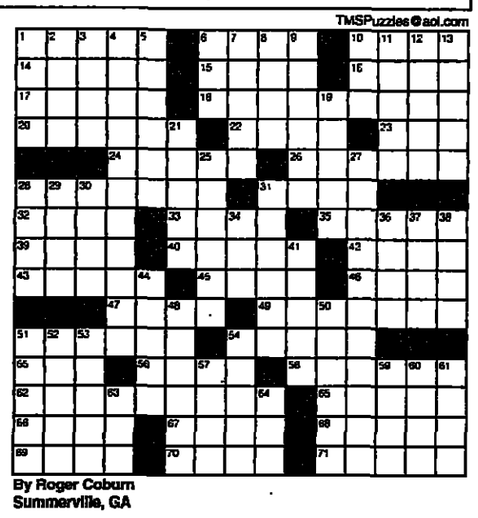
Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.2096	1.2156
DE Mark	0.4329	0.4351
CH Franc	0.5323	0.535
FR Franc	0.1292	0.1298
JP Yen	0.5968	0.5998
NL Guilder	0.3838	0.3857
IT Lira	0.4374	0.4396

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

THE Daily Crossword

Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

TMSPuzzles@aol.com



ACROSS
1 Audience
6 Swedish pop group
10 Water pitcher
14 Vietnamese dress
15 Valley
16 Agitate
17 Hearts or diamonds
18 Outdoor restaurant
20 Soaks in liquid
22 Stalk
23 Dam-building grp.
24 Send payment
26 Fungus-alga composite
28 Multiplied by three
31 Healthy: Sp.
32 Ambiance
33 __ of faith
35 Bid
39 Spill the beans
40 Unvoiced
42 Bona __
43 Astaire's sister
45 Actress Garr
46 Author Bagnold
47 Or __
49 Transfixes
51 One swindled
54 Collection of warships
55 Lemon drink
56 Wonderstruck exclamations
58 Mountain climber
62 Baby's first
65 Put up with
66 Fishing rod
67 Old pronoun
68 Works hard
69 Air pollution
70 Have faith
71 Principle of faith

DOWN
1 Elliott of The Mamas and the Papas
2 Disorderly retreat
3 Garfield's buddy
4 Synchronized swimming
5 Scatter
6 Artist's rep.
7 Sanctified
8 Dog tired
9 Bassett or Lansbury
10 Drop the ball
11 Breadth
12 French student
13 French historian
19 __ acids
21 Silvery fish
25 Conceive
27 Parlor piece
28 Casual farewell
29 Felt regret
30 __ Stanley Gardner
31 Run rings around?
34 High card
36 Flippers
37 Prune text
38 Cincinnati nine
41 Wearies
44 "Middlemarch" author
48 Make even
50 Select new players
51 Improvises musically
52 Language nuance
53 Chamber instrument
54 Camera setting
57 Ironic laugh
59 One of a pride
60 Move little by little
61 Breather
63 Quantity of beer
64 Coloration

By Roger Coburn
Summerville, GA

M	I	L	L		D	U	E	S		R	A	S	P	S
A	S	E	A		O	N	T	O		E	L	T	O	N
R	A	N	I		O	P	A	L		D	O	U	S	E
C	R	O	C	O	D	I	L	E	D	U	N	D	E	E
				R	A	N			A	C	E			
B	E	H	E	A	D		C	A	R	E		C	I	D
I	N	E	R	T		S	A	L	T		C	A	R	O
P	L	A	N	E	T	O	F	T	H	E	A	P	E	S
E	A	R	S		O	L	E	O		L	E	O	N	E
D	I	S		E	N	O	S		P	E	N	N	E	D
			A	L	T			S	A	M				
T	H	E	L	I	O	N	I	N	W	I	N	T	E	R
B	A	R	E	D		A	L	A	N		O	O	Z	E
A	M	O	R	E		H	E	R	E		S	O	R	E
R	E	S	T	S		A	X	E	D		E	L	A	L

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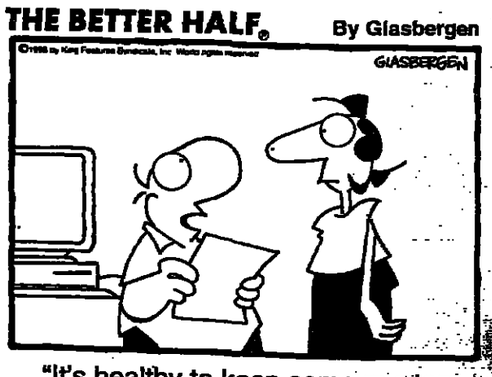
Peanuts

Andy Capp

Mutt'n'Jeff

THE BETTER HALF®

By Glasbergen



"It's healthy to keep some mystery in a marriage, so I'm not telling you how many checks I bounced."

JUMBLE®

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

TECOT

SAUME

YOHRFT

NUSIAD

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Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer: A " " (Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: FEIGN FRANC HARROW SAFARI
Answer: What the dining critic considered the food at the festival — FAIR FAIR FARE

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Azar: Standard of living may fall if population growth rate stays the same

** ACCORDING TO Wasef Azar, vice president of the Amman Chamber of Industry and general manager of the Jordan National Bank, the challenges facing the Kingdom are two types: First, the basic and vital challenges that reflect fundamentally on Jordan's future from now and in the long-term and, second, the present standing challenges that require immediate remedial action.

Azar listed the high population growth rate at the top of the basic and vital challenges as it negatively reflects on the standard of living and consumption (social and economic), as well as the environment. "The challenge is to specify the directions to remedy this situation," he said. The other points mentioned by Azar under this category were the education system, specifying the Jordanian national and/or regulation role and framework within the Arab sphere and specifying the methods of governance/administration including the extent of public participation.

The most important standing challenge at present is the issue of growth in the gross domestic product and the directions of investments as well as the resulting deficits in the balance of trade and the balance of payments, Azar indicated. He listed next the issue of the public sector and the ideological reactions that surround this topic. "Consequently, this affects the state's budget and the tax policies and the directions of privatisations," he said.

The last point raised by Azar as needing immediate remedial action is the hesitation or inability of the private sector to occupy an advanced and more effective role in the development process.

Azar, who was delivering a lecture entitled "The Jordanian economy and future challenges," told This audience that the challenge of population growth has deep dimensions in specifying the framework, directions and cost of development. He pointed out that the population increase in Jordan is capable of absorbing the best positive results of the development process.

"If we assume that the annual average rise of population growth in Jordan is three per cent and that the annual growth rate in the gross domestic product is also three per cent at fixed prices, it means that the per capita average income at fixed prices stays the same over the years," he explained. "Even if a seven or 10 per cent growth is achieved, it would not be effective in improving the standard of living if an inflation not exceeding six per cent is recorded."

Azar pointed out by noting that since it is not easy to post high growth over a period of 10 or 20 years, it is only natural to conclude that if population growth rate remains the same, standard of living would not change at the best scenario. "The standard of living may even fall if high economic growth rates as previously indicated cannot be achieved," he shessed (Al Ra'i + Al Dustour).

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET

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ORGANIZED MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (10/10/1998 - 14/10/1998)
WEEKLY REPORT

DURING THE LAST 3 WEEKS HIGH	LOW	COMPANY NAME	P/E	DIV	NO. OF CONTRACT	NO. OF SHARES EXECUTED	VALUE TRADED JD	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE	AVERAGE MARKET PRICE	TURNOVER SHARES	NO. OF TRADING DAYS
223.000	201.000	ARAB BANK	17.0	.96	136	2803	513448	201.25	208.00	200.00	207.50	+ 6.25	204.803	.032	5
1.650	1.520	JOR.NATIONAL BF.	12.3	4.64	50	65120	67896	1.53	1.53	1.50	1.51	- .02	1.505	.107	5
1.070	1.000	BANK OF JORDAN	-	0.00	79	86182	94941	1.06	1.14	1.06	1.08	+ .02	1.102	.410	5
.950	.900	MID.EAST INV.BE.	56.5	0.00	2	350	304	.90	.88	.86	.86	- .04	.874	.004	2
1.590	1.480	INDUSTRIAL DEV.BK.	10.7	6.78	17	17457	28112	1.58	1.57	1.53	1.53	- .05	1.566	.075	4
2.980	2.790	THE HOUSING BK.	17.2	3.57	75	32479	92125	2.81	2.91	2.79	2.90	- .01	2.823	.033	4
1.800	1.750	JOR.KUWAIT BANK	1.1	0.00	13	1341	2292	1.75	1.75	1.70	1.70	- .05	1.709	.007	4
.580	.530	JOR.GULF BANK	-	0.00	79	124180	71793	.53	.60	.53	.57	+ .04	.578	.621	5
2.000	2.000	ARAB JOR.INV.BE.	38.6	2.63	1	200	380	2.00	1.90	1.90	1.90	- .10	1.900	.001	1
1.770	1.670	JOR.ISLAMIC BANK	16.8	8.00	29	8472	14258	1.70	1.71	1.65	1.65	- .05	1.683	.039	4
1.000	.900	UNION BK.SAV.INV.	143.5	0.00	1	1050	955	.90	.95	.90	.90	-	.910	.005	3
1.690	1.420	JOR.INV.FIN.BANK	22.0	3.50	10	32330	45521	1.42	1.43	1.40	1.43	+ .01	1.408	.162	3
.760	.710	BFIT.AL-MAL (BEITNA)	3.4	0.00	2	250	175	.72	.70	.70	.70	- .02	.700	.013	1
.690	.640	PHILADEL.INV.BK.	998.9	0.00	31	16261	10632	.65	.66	.65	.65	-	.654	.163	4
BANKS SECTOR					529	369162	1302941	INDEX NUMBER : 272.92				CHANGE :+ 2.20%			
1.000	3.000	JORDAN INSURANCE	13.3	4.84	1	50000	155000	3.00	3.10	3.10	3.10	+ .10	3.100	1.000	1
1.980	1.940	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	9.2	0.00	4	5960	11443	1.94	1.92	1.92	1.92	- .02	1.920	.226	2
1.650	1.650	NATI.AHLIA INSUR.	28.5	0.00	3	10552	16911	1.65	1.65	1.60	1.60	- .05	1.603	.528	2
INSURANCE SECTOR					8	66512	183354	INDEX NUMBER : 127.77				CHANGE :+ 0.93%			
1.490	1.410	JOR.ELECTRIC PWR.	9.2	5.81	85	67602	98611	1.44	1.45	1.41	1.42	- .02	1.429	.338	5
1.950	1.550	IRBID ELECTRICITY	11.7	5.26	26	3230	13121	1.77	1.94	1.76	1.90	+ .13	1.840	.238	2
4.730	4.730	HIMEH MINERALS	72.3	0.00	3	80574	355340	4.33	4.50	4.41	4.41	- .32	4.410	46.174	2
4.010	4.010	HIMEH MINERALS /NEW	-	0.00	2	115215	464316	4.01	4.03	4.03	4.03	+ .02	4.030	66.557	1
1.950	1.950	VHCLS. OWNERS FED.	8.6	5.71	2	200	415	1.95	2.10	2.05	2.10	+ .15	2.075	.017	2
4.600	4.350	ARAB INTL.HOTELS	19.3	3.19	3	4100	23960	4.60	4.70	4.60	4.70	+ .10	4.698	.043	1
1.710	1.710	SHIPPING LINES	51.6	5.48	4	800	1317	1.71	1.71	1.46	1.46	- .25	1.646	.012	4
.750	.700	NATL. PORTFOLIO	25.9	0.00	66	263684	171257	.70	.69	.62	.65	- .05	.649	5.274	4
.750	.700	REAL ESTATE INV.	14.3	0.00	5	2237	1620	.75	.73	.72	.73	- .02	.724	.047	4
.300	.270	JORDAN INTI.TRAD.	-	0.00	11	5000	1329	.27	.27	.26	.26	- .01	.266	.147	4
5.510	5.450	ALRA'I	8.3	2.19	3	400	2164	5.45	5.41	5.40	5.41	- .04	5.410	.013	2
1.090	1.090	MID. EAST HOTELS	207.0	0.00	12	5799	6324	1.09	1.11	1.08	1.08	- .01	1.091	.105	4
1.950	1.880	ARAB INTL.INV.EDUC.	9.3	2.13	11	8200	15740	1.89	1.90	1.87	1.88	- .01	1.881	.040	4
.900	.880	ZARKA EDUCATION	20.3	0.00	2	3030	2640	.88	.88	.88	.88	-	.880	.051	1
1.150	1.120	UNIFIED CO.	4.7	10.28	14	8755	9527	1.12	1.11	1.07	1.07	- .05	1.089	.175	4
.520	.500	UNION LAND DEV.	-	0.00	4	2150	1072	.50	.50	.48	.48	- .02	.499	.043	3
1.110	1.090	UNITED FOR FINAN.INV	1.5	5.49	1	5000	5850	1.11	1.17	1.17	1.17	+ .06	1.170	.250	1
SERVICES SECTOR					274	580741	1172101	INDEX NUMBER : 104.32				CHANGE :- 1.13%			
1.930	1.850	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	10.7	6.11	48	16433	66281	1.85	1.88	1.80	1.80	- .05	1.819	.060	4
1.490	1.400	JOR.PHOSPHATE MINES	13.7	0.00	9	684	907	1.40	1.36	1.29	1.29	- .11	1.326	.002	4
4.150	3.750	ARAB POTASH CO.	17.4	5.07	8	44800	163613	3.75	3.80	3.53	3.53	- .22	3.652	.054	3
10.730	10.450	JOR. PETROL.REFINARY	10.1	8.59	56	5646	58965	10.47	10.60	10.35	10.35	- .12	10.444	.088	5
4.900	4.850	JORDAN TANNING	8.0	8.00	2	105	523	4.85	5.00	5.00	5.00	+ .15	4.981	.011	1
1.000	1.000	WOOLEN INDUSTRIES	11.1	7.14	2	100	100	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-	1.000	.007	2
1.150	1.110	INDUSTRIAL COMM.AGR.	67.4	0.00	14	4539	5195	1.14	1.15	1.14	1.14	-	1.145	.091	4
5.700	5.700	JOR.WORSTED MILLS	7.4	3.54	1	100	565	5.70	5.65	5.65	5.65	- .05	5.650	.003	1
2.730	2.560	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	6.6	3.13	196	75019	184598	2.56	2.57	2.40	2.40	- .16	2.461	.417	5
1.130	1.060	JOR.CERAMIC IND.	4.5	9.71	9	2800	2949	1.07	1.08	1.03	1.03	- .04	1.053	.056	3
2.700	2.700	JORDAN DAIRY	6.1	10.25	2	114	309	2.70	2.71	2.71	2.71	+ .01	2.711	.007	1
1.100	1.080	JOR.PIPES MANFCT.	8.6	9.62	18	7163	7695	1.10	1.10	1.04	1.04	- .06	1.074	.220	3
1.660	1.660	GENERAL MINING	100.3	6.90	3	600	912	1.66	1.58	1.43	1.43	- .23	1.520	.060	3
6.900	6.750	ARAB CHEM. DTRGN.	7.4	7.52	1	50	333	6.75	6.65	6.65	6.65	- .10	6.660	.008	1
.570	.570	RAFIA INDUSTRIES	-	0.00	2	375	203	.57	.54	.54	.54	- .03	.541	.022	1
5.500	5.220	DAR ALDAWA DV.INV.	6.2	6.84	44	22320	114903	5.22	5.22	5.12	5.12	- .10	5.153	.372	5
1.800	1.730	ARAB ALUM.IND.	13.1	14.12	9	4623	8221	1.79	1.80	1.77	1.77	- .02	1.778	.077	4
.400	.380	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	12.5	0.00	41	40150	15072	.39	.38	.37	.37	- .02	.375	1.217	4

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You've got a busy day ahead of you, and an interesting night. You'll be working hard, but you could be well rewarded. You're making a favourable impression on some attractive people — and one in particular. You're just so cute, noble, strong, brave, true and all that, you'd impress anybody.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Romance leads to a project that requires a lot of work. As a Taurus, you admire people who know how to work, so you often have that type in your life. You two could come up with an excellent idea today, which requires quite a bit of physical labour, but guess what? It's going to be a lot of fun!

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) If you're like most Geminis, cleaning house is right up there with dropping a bowling ball on your foot on your list of things you'd like to do. It's not a bad idea to get the job completed, however. Don't drop the bowling ball on your foot. Just go ahead and shampoo the rug, or whatever it is that you'vebeen avoiding.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Race around and finish your chores as quickly as possible, even if it takes most of the day. It'll be relatively easy to get distracted, but that's not going to get any better. By tomorrow it'll be almost impossible to stick to a schedule. So if there's any scheduled work to be done, you'd better get it out of the way right now.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You're doing well financially, partly because you're lucky, but partly because of the way you're spending your money. Generally, you want what you want when you want it, and the highest quality, too. But right now you're being a little more careful. That's good. Now don't go buying things you don't need just because they're on sale.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You're powerful again today, but still compassionate, loving and motivated to care for others. Virgo is the sign of service, but did you know that service is one of the highest forms of enlightenment? Serving one who serves is at the very top. You don't have to go that far today, but do what feels good. It'll be appropriate.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) This could turn out to be a very nice day for you. But first, you have a few details to handle, a few phone calls to make. You have regulations to comply with, papers to fill out and drop in the mail. Promise yourself a really neat treat as a reward. Have it be clothing instead of food.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Looks like people want to do what you suggest because they value your judgement. You're often right, and your friends know that. They're likely to follow your advice today. That won't be quite so true tomorrow, so schedule your time accordingly. If you want to do something huge, start it now.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You love being successful in your job, of course, but even more important are the friendships you make. Your future income might depend on these relationships, though that's not why you made them. You're interested in deep connections; that's why so many people like you. Go on out there today and gather up even more.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) The going is easy for a while, but then you start hitting obstacles. They're not from your own doing. Conditions have changed, that's all. You've got the whole programme figured out, except for one little detail, a person who wants to boss you around. Unfortunately, this person knows less than you do, or so you think.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Balance the checkbook before you go to the stores. You'll probably find some good deals, but you still need to stay within budget. There's no point in buying something just because it's on sale, then finding out later you don't need it. That's certainly not a savings, even if it seems like one at first. Think about it.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You'll need to make peace with somebody you've been arguing with lately. You two have been going round and round over the silliest little things. You both know this argument is going nowhere. Why don't you just hang it up? Declare a truce and get on to whatever's coming next.

Birthstone of September: Opal — Tourmaline

Britain extends £1.7m technical aid to Jordan

AMMAN (J.T.) — British ambassador, Christopher Battiscombe and Minister of Planning Nabil Ammari, signed an agreement under which Britain's Department for International Development (DFID) will provide the government of Jordan with £1.7 million of technical assistance to support the implementation of the second stage of Value Added Tax (VAT).

The grant, which will be given over a two-year period, comes in response to the Jordanian government's request for assistance in providing training for officials working at the Sales Tax Directorate as well as providing them with computers and other equipment that will enable them to better carry out their job.

The business community is likely to benefit from the implementation of a new, modern, equitable and fair taxation policy and from the increased professionalism of the Sales Tax Department. This will reduce the unfair competition by tax evaders and reduce the possibility of double taxation. Improved competitiveness should encourage exports which would help enforce the conditions necessary for economic growth and increased employment.

This project forms part of Britain's assistance to economic reform and social development in Jordan. The British government is also supporting a project to restructure the Amman Financial Market as well as other projects with the Ministry of Social Development and the NGO community.

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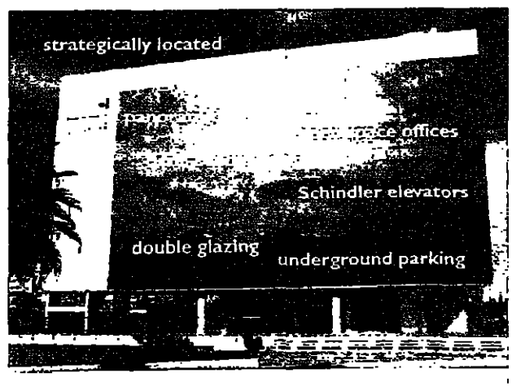

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Police raid Olympic Committee and cycling headquarters

ROME (AFP) — Italian police raided the Italian cycling federation's headquarters Thursday as part of their ongoing investigation into drugs in domestic sport.

The police also raided the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI) headquarters and its laboratory taking away documents going back as far as 1985 on drugs tests carried out, particularly concerning cycling.

Two boxes of pharmaceutical products were also taken away from the cycling federation headquarters.

Earlier on Thursday Carlo Tranquilli, one of the Italian Football Federation's official doctors, said he was resigning in the wake of the doping scandal.

Tranquilli had come in for severe criticism on Wednesday by federation president Luciano Nizzola regarding the hit-and-miss system of doping tests in the Italian league.

The enquiry has broadened since it was revealed that the CONI laboratory had tested only a fraction of footballers' samples, destroyed results and was accused of covering up positive tests.

Deputy Prime Minister Walter Veltroni ordered an enquiry into the scandal, which also cost Mario Pescante his job as head of the CONI. Heads also rolled at the Italian Sports Doctors Federations (FMSI) who are responsible for operating the lab at Acqua Acetosa.

On Wednesday a report in the weekly Guerin Sportivo magazine reported that the market for doping substances in Italy is worth more than 500 billion lira ($300 million) a year.

Top of the sales list is EPO, the drug which increases the amount of oxygen in the blood and which is most popular among cyclists, with around a fifth of the annual total and showing a 14 per cent growth so far this year on 1997 figures.

However, the 65-page report did not spare CONI, which is the governing body for all sport and doubles as the national sports ministry.

The CONI was taken to task for "the lack of overall control which allowed these things to happen in the first place."

Veltroni concluded there was a need for drastic changes — "major innovation, including a reform of the CONI, to enable us to repair our image in world sport."

The deputy premier must now weigh up two options for the immediate future of sport in Italy: whether to allow the CONI to sort out the mess itself in next month's elections for a new executive; or to sack them all and instal a temporary trouble-shooter to reform the CONI over the next six months.

Ronaldo blasts federation over injury slur

RIO DE JANEIRO (AFP) — Brazilian world footballer of the year Ronaldo on Thursday blasted his country's federation for what he perceived as a slur on him by questioning his fitness.

Inter Milan striker Ronaldo told O Globo daily he was angry at indications the federation were considering recalling him to the Brazil squad in the run-up to the team's next friendly to allow team doctors to examine him.

"Does someone think I am malingering?" Ronaldo asked.

"Nobody in the (federation's) technical commission asked the club or myself for information. They have my phone number. They just have to call me up," said Ronaldo, who has not played for his country since his instantly forgettable World Cup final showing.

According to federation sources, the Brazilian authorities did contact Inter for information on Ronaldo's current level of fitness, including the result of medical tests he took recently in Los Angeles.

The player has barely played this season for Inter and reportedly suffered convulsions immediately prior to the World Cup final defeat by France.

He hoped originally to return this weekend against Lazio but is still suffering tendon trouble in both knees.

New Brazilian coach Wanderley Luxemburgo hopes to get Ronaldo over for a friendly next month against Russia — if only to get team doctors to check on his state of health.

But Ronaldo said he didn't think too much of that plan.

"At the end of the day I am not playing at the moment, and I want the best for the national side and Inter. Of course I want to play for Brazil but for that I have to be knocking in the goals for Inter," he pointed out.

The star is back in light training but is not yet back lifting weights.

"We've devised a four-week plan. Treatment in the first, bodybuilding in the second, physical reconditioning in the third and then training with the ball in the fourth.

"When I feel ready I will announce my return," Ronaldo promised

U.S. tennis player Pete Sampras (L) and Austrian Olympic Alpine Skiing champion Hermann Maier (R) are all smiles after exchanging a racket and a pair of skies in a Vienna Hotel. Sampras is in Vienna to participate at the Austrian Indoors Open (Reuters photo)

Rusedski and Henman advance — but stiff tests await

VIENNA (AFP) — Britain's 1997 U.S. Open finalist Greg Rusedski ended veteran Thomas Muster's hopes of capturing the $800,000 ATP title in front of his home fans here on Thursday breezing through 6-4, 6-3.

And Tim Henman made it a British double by joining Rusedski in the quarterfinals with a gutsy win over Sweden's Thomas Enqvist, recovering after dropping the opening set to advance 6-7 (2/7) 6-3, 6-3.

Henman, the British No. 1, now faces the stiffest of hurdles in the shape of top seed and world number one Pete Sampras.

And Rusedski has a similarly tough test as he has to play Australian world number two and U.S. Open champion Pat Rafter, who swept past Magnus Norman of Sweden 6-3, 6-2 in little more than an hour.

Canadian-born Rusedski, who has slipped to 17 in the rankings, broke veteran Muster, a former world number one, once in the first set and twice in the second to set up a memorable triumph.

And he now goes on a revenge mission against Rafter, who denied him U.S. Open final glory at Flushing Meadows in 1997.

Rusedski, who had beaten Muster in their only prior two meetings, was always in control in Thursday's encounter, making the decisive break in the first set to go 4-3 up when his 31-year-old opponent netted a forehand.

The Briton, who reached the final here last year where he lost to Goran Ivanisevic, pressed home his advantage when he broke Muster in the first game of the second set and broke the 1995 French Open winner again to take the match.

Earlier, American Davis Cup stalwart Todd Martin upset fourth-seeded Czech player Petr Korda.

Australian Open champion Korda rallied from 1-5 in the second set to force a tiebreak, but still went down 6-3, 7-6 (7/3) in 1hr 28min.

Martin, who served and volleyed solidly and came up with nine aces, finished the match with a service winner on his second match point as he earned a quarter-final meeting with Cedric Pioline.

The Frenchman eliminated sixth-seeded Dutchman Richard Krajicek on Wednesday night.

There were no such problems for fifth-seeded Slovakian Karol Kucera, who beat promising German teenager Tommy Haas in straight sets 7-5, 6-4 in 1hr 28 minutes.

Tax costs mount for Sydney Games

SYDNEY (AFP) — Sydney Olympic Games organisers have almost doubled the potential cost of a new consumer tax sought by the government to A$200 million ($120 million).

"The worst case scenario would be A$200 million," New South Wales Olympics Minister Michael Knight said Friday of the effect a 10 per cent Goods and Services tax would have on the 2000 Games.

That was A$90 million ($54 million) more than he estimated last week when Treasurer Peter Costello first raised the possibility of introducing the tax on July 1, 2000.

The increase came after the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympics (SOCOG) re-examined the effect the tax would have on sponsorship and ticket sales. SOCOG chief executive Sandy Hollway said they would be unable to pass on the costs in prices.

Knight said the Olympics should be exempt from the tax because they were bringing in A$1 billion ($600 million) additional tax revenue to Australia.

He said if a GST had been in place when they bid against Beijing in 1993, China would have won the 2000 Games.

Meanwhile, rivalry between Sydney and Melbourne flared up when a Melbourne city official said Sydney had left it too late to win big events for the city after the Olympics.

Ron Walker, head of the Melbourne Major Events Company, predicted Sydney would be like Atlanta where, he said, there was no planning for events after the Games.

"It had the Games and then there was nothing, it caused a lot of problems," he said.

"We will have more people at the opening ceremony at the Melbourne Commonwealth Games than you will have at the opening ceremony in Sydney," said Walker, chairman of Melbourne's bid committee for the 2006 Commonwealth Games.

"Stadium quality is not the key to it. There is not the enthusiasm in Sydney," he said.

A spokesman for New South Wales premier Bob Carr refused to be drawn into the argument. "We will let Sydney's success speak for itself," he said.

Venus Williams

Williams reaches Swiss quarters

ZURICH, Switzerland (AP) — After a four-day wait, Venus Williams began play in the dlrs 1 million European Championships with a 7-5, 6-3 victory over Corina Morariu on Thursday.

A qualifier last year, Williams was the No. 2 seed at the European tournament — which officially changed its name to Swisscom Challenge Thursday — and consequently received a bye into the second round.

"There's always the possibility it can hurt your game and you become 'off' if you start late in the tournament," said Williams, who won her third career title two weeks ago at the Grand Slam Cup in Munich. "I never had to start this late before, but I worked hard and got some practice in, and I think I played well."

Morariu played three qualifying matches to reach the main draw, then posted a first-round win over France's Sandrine Testud.

Williams broke in the third game to go up 2-1, but Morariu broke back immediately. Williams had another break opportunity at 3-3, but squandered five break points.

At 4-4 Williams again blew a chance to take the lead, pushing Morariu to deuce eight times but wasting four break points.

Morariu continued to struggle with her service game, again going to deuce four times before allowing Williams to break and take a 6-5 lead.

The second set began similarly with the players trading serves before Williams broke twice more to clinch the victory.

"I have to get better when it comes to capitalizing on my opportunities," said Williams, who reached the quarterfinals last year before losing to eventual champion Lindsay Davenport.

"I also made a lot of unforced errors which I need to improve on."

Williams, a semifinalist at the U.S. Open, will meet seventh-seeded Mary Pierce in the quarterfinals.

For Swiss fans, interest in the quarterfinals was dimmed when Barbara Schett of Austria beat local favorite Patty Schnyder, seeded fifth, 6-4, 1-6, 7-6 (7-4).

Nathalie Tauziat of France also played her first match of the tournament Thursday, defeating Lisa Raymond 6-2, 6-3.

"I was angry when I saw the schedule and I wasn't playing until Thursday," said Tauziat, a finalist last year. "You see everyone play, you see everyone win and defend their points and it's very frustrating."

Eighth-seeded Dominique Van Roost reached the quarterfinals, beating Amelie Mauresmo of France 6-3, 6-4. Van Roost will face Irina Spirlea in the quarterfinals, and Davenport, No. 1 in the world, plays sixth-seed Amanda Coetzer.

China, Malaysia set to hold GP

PARIS (AFP) — China and Malaysia are both set to host Formula One Grand Prix races in 1999, according to a provisional calendar released Thursday by the FIA, motor sport's international governing body.

China is set to host the second race of the season at Zhuhai on March 21 while a Malaysian Grand Prix has been pencilled in for October 17.

The Kuala Lumpur race would be the penultimate race of the season, ahead of the season-ending Japanese Grand Prix at Suzuka.

The moves come as Formula One begins to move away from its traditional European heartland as governments in European nations stamp down on the tobacco-funded advertising that provides crucial support to the Grand Prix circus.

The San Marino and Hungarian Grand Prixs are included on the provisional calendar subject to those races meeting FIA requirements.

The Hungarian race organisers have been fined $1 million for a track invasion by spectators after the 1998 race, although 75 per cent of the sum has been suspended unless there is a similar invasion in 1999 or 2000.

The 17-race provisional calendar is:

March 7	Australia (Melbourne)
March 21	China (Zhuhai) +
April 11	Brazil (Sao Paulo)
May 2	San Marino (Imola)++
May 16	Monaco
May 30	Spain (Barcelona)
June 13	Canada (Montreal)
June 27	France (Magny-Cours)
July 11	Great Britain (Silverstone)
July 25	Austria (Spielberg)
August 1	Germany (Hockenheim)
August 15	Hungary (Budapest)+++
August 29	Belgium (Spa-Francorchamps)
September 12	Italy (Monza)
September 26	Europe (Nurburgring)
October 17	Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur) +
October 31	Japan (Suzuka)

Reserve venue: Argentina (Buenos Aires)

+ - Provisional

++ - subject to clarification of Italian law relating to criminal responsibility in dangerous sports

+++ - subject to the provision of a satisfactory safety plan being submitted to the World Motor Sport Council in December.

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FIA issues World Rally Championship calendar

PARIS (AFP) — The provisional calendar for the 1999 World Rally Championship released Thursday by the FIA, motor sport's international governing body:

January 17-20	Monte Carlo
February 12-14	Sweden
February 26-28	Kenya
March 21-24	Portugal
April 18-21	Spain
May 9-12	Corsica
May 23-26	Argentina
June 6-9	Acropolis, Greece
July 16-18	New Zealand
Aug 20-22	Finland
September 5-7 or 19-21	China
October 3-6	San Remo (Italy)
November 4-7	Australia
November 21-23	RAC (Great Britain)

Yankees must overcome Padres for baseball immortality

NEW YORK (AFP) — On the verge of baseball immortality, the New York Yankees must still prove themselves World Series champions before they can join the ranks of the mightiest teams in baseball history.

The Yankees, coming off an American League-record 114-win season, play host to National League champion San Diego here Saturday in the opening game of the 94th World Series.

The Yankees make their 35th trip to the World Series seeking their 24th title, and second in three years, against a team that has reached the Series only once in its 30-year history, a 1984 loss to Detroit.

"We have a chance to carve out our place in history — not just Yankee history, but baseball history," Yankee pitcher David Cone said. "We're aware of it. But we don't dwell on it. That's a good way to be."

Had Cleveland not upset New York in last year's opening round, the "Bronx Bombers" might be going for their third Series crown in a row.

"We could be going for number three. But it didn't happen," Cone said. "Maybe that's why we won 114 games. Maybe last year was such a slap in the face that guys were motivated in the off season."

Motivating them now is absent teammate Darryl Strawberry, lost for the playoffs after surgery for colon cancer. "We will wear his heart and courage on our sleeves," Yankees catcher Joe Girardi said.

Pressure will mount from the opening pitch when San Diego right-hander Kevin Brown faces New York southpaw David Wells. The losing club will have squandered a start by their ace hurler.

Brown, who helped Florida win the 1997 Series, went 19-7 this season with a 2.31 earned-run average and his 12-3 record against the Yankees is the best of any active pitcher. But he last faced New York in 1995.

"I make stuff up as I go along. That's how confident I feel out there right now," Brown said.

Wells, who grew up in San Diego, went 18-4 with a 3.49 ERA, struck out 163 batters and threw a perfect game against Minnesota in May.

The Yankees also have Cone, 20-7 with 209 strikeouts; Andy Pettite, with 146 strikeouts and a 4.24 ERA, and Cuba's Orlando "El Duque" Hernandez, who went 12-4 with 131 strikeouts and a 3.13 ERA.

"I'm sure we're underdogs. Nobody talks about San Diego," said Padres slugger Tony Gwynn, an eight-time NL batting champion. "But here we are. We don't care if you give us any respect. Look who we have beaten."

The Padres have already ousted some of the game's great hurlers, including Houston's Randy "Big Unit" Johnson and the Atlanta trio of Tom Glavine, Greg Maddux and John Smoltz.

New York's relievers include Panamanian closer Mariano Rivera, with 36 saves and a 1.91 ERA with only one hit allowed in nine playoff innings, and Australian left-hander Graeme Lloyd, 3-0 with a 1.67 ERA and a habit of getting crucial outs when called upon.

The global talent also includes Hideki Irabu, who could become Japan's first World Series player if he finds his way to the mound. He has not played in the playoffs and was asked to warm up only once.

Irabu was 13-9 this year with a 4.06 ERA and 126 strikeouts. He began 9-3 with a 2.86 ERA in 17 starts but finished 4-6 with a 5.91 ERA in his last 11 starts, losing a playoff starting job to Hernandez.

Irabu refused to play for San Diego when he arrived from Japan and was traded to the Yankees, who paid him six million dollars but have not used him in a game since September 27.

The clubs have a combined 212 regular-season triumphs, the most by any rivals in World Series history, two more than Baltimore and Cincinnati in 1970. San Diego is the first team to face three 100-win playoff rivals.

Gwynn is San Diego's lone holdover from the 1984 Series team and excited about playing in Yankee Stadium for the first time.

"In '84 I was just happy to go. Thinking about it for 14 years, I know that's not the right attitude," he said. "Now I want to win, we have all waited a long time. Just getting to go is not going to satisfy us."

Four ex-Yankees return for the Padres, led by Jim Leyritz, whose key 1996 Series homer swung momentum to New York to stay. Also back from 1996 are Brian Boehringer and Ruben Rivera, Yankee closer Mariano's cousin.

The fourth is southpaw starter Sterling Hitchcock, the NL championship Most Valuable Player who went 9-7 with a 3.93 ERA during the season.

"They said he couldn't handle the pressure in New York. That's why they got rid of him," Leyritz said. "But he has done a pretty good job of handling the pressure."

And Hitchcock said, "It doesn't matter to me if it's New York or Tokyo as long as it's the World Series."

NBA owners find union plan taxing

NEW YORK (AFP) — National Basketball Association owners will respond to a players' union proposal to tax clubs over a salary limit here on Friday, but are dubious the idea can be agreed upon.

"We're not at all confident that a tax will provide the needed relief," NBA deputy commissioner Russ Granik said. "One of the concerns with the luxury tax is that it's not effective enough. But we've promised to see if there's anything there at all that will work for us."

Owners locked out players July 1 seeking to control payrolls by ending exemptions to current salary cap rules, something the players oppose.

The 3 1/2-month stalement forced cancelation of the first two weeks of the NBA season, 99 games that are the first ever missed by the league in a labor dispute.

In the wake of early North American sport labor feuds, notably the 1994 cancelation of baseball's World Series, fans wonder if any lessons were learned by either side in regard to testing fans' patience.

Dave Checketts, president of the New York Knicks, said owners have learned only that once the fans are upset, owners cannot afford to strike a deal for less than they want — not exactly the lesson fans hoped for.

"We would like to say we should learn from baseball," Checketts said. "What they did to the World Series and when they went through this long labor situation, it ruined the sport. It ruined fan interest. People were angry at the game."

"The reality is, once they incurred that damage, the mistake they made was coming back too soon and not getting a labor agreement that would carry them into the next century."

"If we learned anything from baseball, it's that we must keep them out as long as it takes. They didn't hold them out long enough."

The union tax plan would hit any annual salary paid by teams over the salary cap, but only if that salary is above $18 million.

Last season, only Michael Jordan and Patrick Ewing would have been affected and Jordan is contemplating retirement.

NBA officials fear a situation such as that now facing baseball, where a few teams pay huge salaries and many others spend far less and are uncompetitive from the beginning.

"Teams that have the greater resources, it would just give them a competitive advantage," Granik said.

Jaguars and Vikings try to match Denver's 6-0 start

MINNEAPOLIS (AFP) — Unbeatens Minnesota and Jacksonville will try to match reigning Super Bowl champion Denver with 6-0 starts to the National Football League season with triumphs Sunday.

Denver has a week off while Jacksonville (5-0) visits Buffalo (2-3) and the Vikings play host here to the woeful Washington Redskins, off to their worst start since 1961 with an American football-worst 0-6 record.

Minnesota quarterback Randall Cunningham, the NFL's highest-rated passer, worries that complacency might set in for the Vikings after a week off and the Redskins' struggles.

"A lot of those things go through your mind," Cunningham said. "We don't change much. We don't get high when things go well or down when things don't go right."

Cunningham has completed 59 of 98 passes for 978 yards for an NFL-best average of 10.2 yards a catch, with 10 touchdowns with no interceptions, since Brad Johnson went down three games ago with a leg injury.

A trio of top receivers have provided Cunningham top targets and made opposing defenses uncertain which threat to guard against the most.

Cris Carter has 24 catches for 305 yards and four touchdowns. Randy Moss has 22 receptions for 463 yards and six touchdowns and Jake Reed has 13 catches for 171 yards and one touchdown.

"With Cris and Jake you are talking about two receivers who have each gained 1,000 yards the last four seasons," Vikings coach Dennis Green said. "Add Randy to that. I don't think anybody has had this type of lineup. Randy bring it to another level. He gives us that deep threat."

Cunningham threw for 442 yards and four touchdowns against Green Bay, riddling the Packers for 545 yards, the most ever allowed by the fabled club. Minnesota leads the NFL with 15 touchdown passes and is second with 166 points.

"I don't see anybody else beating them," Packers' safety LeRoy Butler said. "They're going into the sunset now."

American football's most competitive division battle, the NFC West, takes center stage when New Orleans travels to division co-leader Atlanta.

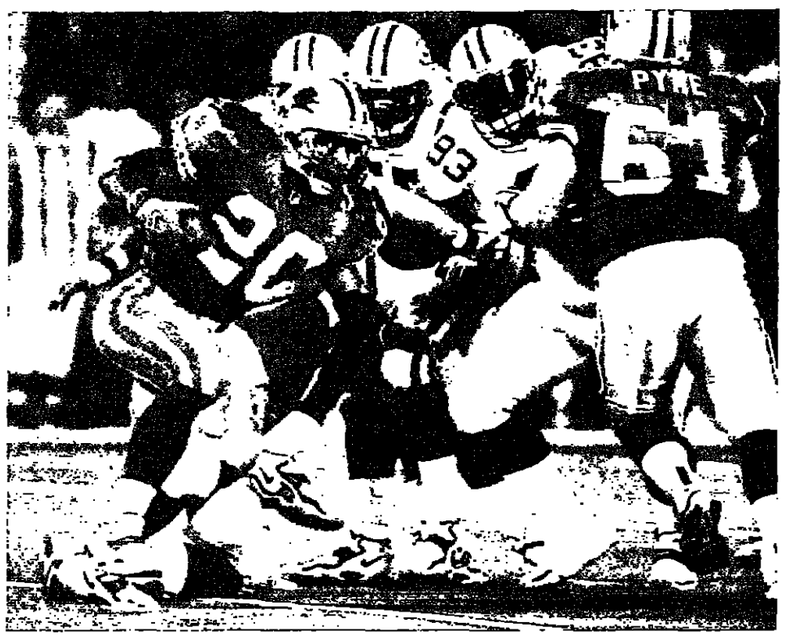
The Saints (3-2) took a chance on castoff quarterback Kerry Collins from Carolina after he asked to be demoted from starting duties for the winless Panthers. Who better for Collins to go to for redemption than the Saints?

The Falcons (4-1) hope for a victory to keep pace with co-leader San Francisco. The 49ers, paced by Steve Young and a top receiving trio of their own, play host to struggling Indianapolis (1-5).

The 49ers are sparked by NFL all-time touchdown leader Jerry Rice, with 27 catches for 463 yards and three touchdowns, plus J.J. Stokes with 22 catches for 288 yards and four touchdowns and Terrell Owens with 19 catches for 322 yards and two touchdowns.

In other games, Arizona visits the New York Giants, Carolina travels to Tampa Bay, Philadelphia plays at San Diego, Chicago hosts Dallas, Baltimore visits Pittsburgh, Cincinnati travels to Tennessee and Miami hosts St. Louis.

The New York Jets visit division-leading New England on Monday night.



Detroit Lions' Barry Sanders (20) looks for running room as Lions' Mike Compton and Jim Pyne (61) hold off Green Bay Packers' Vonnie Holliday (90) Bernardo Harris (55) and Gilbert Brown during third quarter play. Sanders rushed for 155 yards, caught two passes for 27 yards and scored a touchdown on his longest run of 73 yards as Detroit defeated Green Bay 27-20 (Reuters photo)

Ex-England star forced to retire

LONDON (AFP) — Former England defender Gary Stevens announced Friday that he has been forced to retire from football due to a leg injury.

Stevens, 35, made over 500 appearances in his 18-year professional career, mainly for Everton and Glasgow Rangers, and won 46 caps for England.

"It is sad and frustrating after playing and being active for so long," Stevens said.

But Stevens is now furthering his career on a degree course in physiotherapy at Salford University.

"I'm a mature student! I'm back at university and hopefully I will be able to stay in the game in that capacity," Stevens said.

Lewis set to sign up for Holyfield showdown

LONDON (AFP) — Britain's Lennox Lewis is poised to follow Evander Holyfield and sign for their multi-million heavyweight unification fight on February 27 or March 6.

Lennox's promoter Panos Eliades said: "Now Holyfield's signed, there's no problem with Lennox signing, which will probably be done on Monday. I've spoken to Holyfield's lawyer Jim Thomas and everything looks good."

WBC heavyweight champion Lennox will put pen to paper once the television deal, which is being negotiated by American promoter Don King, is completed with cable network Home Box Office. A TV hitch has still to be resolved — not over Lewis v Holyfield itself but on Holyfield's future fights if he beats Lewis. HBO want to acquire the services of the WBA and IBF champion, as do their pay-per-view rivals Showtime.

"The only problem is between the TV companies," added Eliades. "HBO want to sign up Holyfield and so do Showtime if he becomes undisputed champion. That hiccough has still to be ironed out."

Lewis's manager Frank Maloney said: "I'm excited — it's all systems go. There's no problems from our end. Lennox is happy. It's just a matter of putting his signature on the contract and faxing it back."

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Q.1 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

♠7 3 ♥K 8 7 6 5 ♦K J 8 4 ♣6

The bidding has proceeded

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♥	Pass	?	

What do you bid now?

Q.2 - East-West vulnerable, as South you hold

♠5 ♥Q J 10 7 ♦A 10 6 5 ♣K 9 5 2

The bidding has proceeded:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♣	1NT	Dbl	2♣
Pass	Pass	?	

What action do you take?

Q.3 - As South, vulnerable, you hold

♠A 8 ♥10 7 6 2 ♦A Q J 10 5 ♣A 9

Partner opens the bidding with one heart. What do you respond?

Q.4 - East-West vulnerable, as South you hold

♠A K J 9 8 7 ♥10 6 ♦A K J 8 ♣6

The bidding has proceeded

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
1♣	1♠	3♣	4♠
5♣	?		

What action do you take?

Q.5 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold

♠A K 5 2 ♥10 7 6 3 ♦Void ♣K J 8 5 2

Your right-hand opponent opens the bidding with one diamond. What action do you take?

Q.6 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

♠J 4 ♥A Q 10 8 7 6 ♦8 ♣A 9 4 3

The bidding has proceeded.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
3♣	Pass	Pass	?

What action do you take?

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Afghan Taleban to hold talks with Iran in Jeddah

KABUL (R) — Afghanistan's Islamist Taleban militia, locked in a military standoff with neighbouring Iran, are to hold peace talks with Tehran in the Saudi Arabian city Jeddah, a militia spokesman said on Friday.

A Taleban spokesman, Abdul Hai Mutmaen, told Reuters from the militia's headquarters in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar, that an agreement to meet Iranian leaders in Jeddah was reached during a U.N. envoy's visit on Wednesday.

The talks will be held under the auspices of the Organisation of Islamic Conference, which is to decide on the dates, he said.

"In the talks we had on Wednesday with [U.N. envoy on Afghanistan Lakhdar] Ibrahimi, it was agreed upon that for solving the entanglements with Iran a joint delegation meet in Jeddah for talks... we are ready to send our team," he said.

"Our message to Iran will be that war will hurt both of us, economically and politically," Mutmaen said.

Mutmaen said the Taleban would also release 25 Iranians, an agreement on which was reached when Ibrahimi met Taleban's supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar in Kandahar.

Predominantly Shiite Muslim Iran is locked in a tense military standoff with the Sunni Taleban, and says it has some 270,000 troops on the Afghan border for military exercises.

But the spokesman said tension with Iran had decreased after Ibrahimi's visit and the militia was ready to release the Iranians in return for release of the Taleban prisoners.

"We hurry in releasing Iranian prisoners under the mediation of the U.N. and Ibrahimi has assured us that Iran too will free our prisoners," he said.

It was not known how many Taleban fighters are in Iran's captivity but opposition groups in Afghanistan hold thousands of militiamen and the Taleban say Iran can help in their release.

Tensions between the Taleban and Iran flared in August after 10 Iranian diplomats and a journalist were killed in the northern Afghan city of Mazar-e-Sharif when it fell to the Taleban. The militia says the Iranians were killed by renegade fighters acting without orders and promised to punish them.

Tehran demanded the release of dozens of Iranians held by the Taleban, and an apology for the killings. Some Iranian officials have said the Taleban should hand over the culprits, a demand rejected by the movement's officials.

Mutmaen said the militia felt sorry for the killings but he rejected the demand to apologise or hand over the renegade fighters to Iran.

"Mr. Ibrahimi raised the issue," he said. "We said that we have our own rules and penal code. If Iran can prove the crime on the Emirate [Afghanistan].... we will apologise... the killing has not taken place in the framework of our official line."

Ibrahimi, a former Algerian foreign minister now on a mission to ease tensions between Iran and the Taleban, went to Afghanistan on Wednesday after meeting Pakistani and Afghan officials in Islamabad.

He had met Iranian officials during his four day stay in Tehran last week.

Ibrahimi's mission includes the restoration of peace in Afghanistan where the Taleban are battling the last remaining opposition forces led by Ahmad Shah Masood, military chief of the ousted Afghan government.

Masood's forces remain the last obstacle in the Taleban's way of gaining complete control of Afghanistan, 95 per cent of which they have already captured.

PKK CAMP: Lebanese troops on Friday enter into the closed camp of the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. The camp is just two kilometres far from the Syrian borders. Local and international journalists visited the empty camp as Ankara accused Damascus of backing the PKK and sheltering its Abdullah Ocalan (AFP photo)

King closely following progress of Wye talks

(Continued from page 1)

Referring to the so-called alternative homeland for the Palestinians in Jordan, the prime minister said: "I tell those who peddle the idea that the Palestinian aspirations lie on the western side of the River Jordan, not on the east of it. The idea of an alternative homeland has vanished for ever. The Palestinians assume the task of achieving their legitimate rights and goals. Jordan is an independent and sovereign country and its relations with the Palestinian National Authority are clear."

"With the signing of a Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty the common borders have been demarcated and the documents have been deposited with the U.N. This means that the boundaries between Jordan and Israel and the Palestinian territories constitute international borders and not mere ceasefire lines."

Asked about his views regarding the convening of an Arab summit, the prime minister said: "We in Jordan support every Arab meeting and we never missed a summit meeting because we are for consensus. But unfortunately there are different views concerning the summit and the Arab leaders are split over what should be discussed at such a summit."

"It is regrettable to say that inter-Arab differences are great and they focus mainly over border, the view towards the peace process, the situation in Iraq, the African question and many other issues," he said.

"We are for a summit provided ample preparations are made for it," Tarawneh said.

Referring to the recent escalation of media campaigns between Jordan and Syria, he said that "the Syrians have been casting suspicion on our national stand while we continue to move and offer positive proposals to the Syrians."

"For more than a year now we have been facing the escalation of Syrian media campaigns against Jordan and people are asking for how long can we remain silent," said the prime minister.

He added: "We have called for meetings with the Syrians but we failed to get an answer. They have been trying to change the facts on the ground through fabricating history and casting doubts about our national stands. All this requires from us to reply to such attitude. Jordan hosts nearly 125,000 Syrians working and living in Jordan and in contrast Syria holds 742 Jordanians in prison."

The prime minister said: "When a persona non grata tries to enter a country he is normally told that he is not welcomed and should return home. But people should not be held in detention without trial."

Tarawneh disclosed new facts by saying: "A number of Jordanians who hold official positions in the country have vanished for months and no one knows anything about their whereabouts."

'Most Israelis are for concessions at Wye summit'

TEL AVIV (AP) — By a margin of nearly two to one, Israelis back an American proposal for Israel to turn over another 13 per cent of the West Bank as part of an agreement with the Palestinians, an Israeli newspaper reported Friday.

The Palestinians accepted the American proposal last March.

Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu, after initially rejecting the proposal, eventually agreed, on condition that three per cent of the area be set aside as a nature reserve in which Israel retains full security control for the time being.

The newspaper Maariv published a Gallup poll that said 57 per cent of Israelis favour handing over 13 per cent, while 30 per cent are opposed.

The Israeli withdrawal is a key element in a series of interim peace agreements between Israel and the Palestinians.

The last one was signed in January 1997. They call on Israel to hand over all of the West Bank to Palestinian civilian control in three stages, except for occupied Jerusalem, Israeli settlements and designated military locations. But none of the pullbacks has been implemented.

U.S. officials say the focus of the summit at Wye Plantation is reaching agreement on the size of the withdrawal, while reassuring Israel about security issues.

The poll also showed that 82 per cent of Israelis hope the summit meeting will end in agreement, but only 52 per cent believe it will.

One thousand Israeli adults were questioned for the poll. The paper said the margin of error is 3.2 per cent.

Rights groups demand Morocco give full accounting of prisoners

PARIS (AP) — Human rights groups on Friday demanded that Morocco "shed complete light" on the fate of political prisoners who went missing years ago.

At a Paris news conference, both French and Morocean rights groups acknowledged the progress made this week when the Rabat government acknowledged for the first time that 56 political prisoners missing since the 1960s were dead.

The government also freed 28 prisoners this week, after they were pardoned by King Hassan II.

Hassan has in recent years loosened his grip on the government and sought to liberalise the country. He said last week he wanted remaining human rights cases settled within six months.

Family members and rights groups say there are more political prisoners still in jail, and others who may have died.

They also want to know the circumstances under which those now known dead perished, and where they are buried. And they want an independent investigation of all the cases, carried out by a non-governmental commission.

"It's a scandal," said Radija Rouissi, whose brother, Abdulhak, disappeared in 1964, and hasn't been heard from since.

"They don't even tell us under what conditions they were killed. And where are the graves?"

Hassan has set up an official council on human rights to deal with the issue.

Patrick Baudouin, head of the Paris-based International Federation of Human Rights, demanded that the government "shed complete light on this issue."

"We are not at the end of the road," he said. "The case of the disappeared prisoners is not limited to 56 people." He said that in one secret detention centre alone, more than 73 political prisoners were kept.

"There's been a beginning — when will there be a follow-up?" asked Abdul Aziz Bennani, head of the Moroccan Organisation of Human Rights.

Government to present plans on water tapping project

(Continued from page 1)

But even the Disi project, schemes under Jordan's 1994 peace treaty with Israel promising more water for the Kingdom, and current projects renewing leaking pipes, will not end the water deficit.

"Given the rapid population growth and increased demand, with the Disi project we will be (in 2005) where we are today," Mulki said.

More drastic measures, including sharp hikes in water prices, or reducing the water used for irrigation, would mean formidable domestic opposition — a consideration that has made many officials hesitate to take such action.

While acknowledging the political downside of such measures, Salameh insisted there is no alternative.

"If nothing is done, they will end up destroying the water supply and aquifers of the country," said Salameh. "Radical management and radical decisions are a must."

Settlers block highway

(Continued from page 1)

The Palestinian security officer, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Israeli vehicle was stopped near Abbas' house because it appeared suspicious. The officer said the joint command was called, and its officers escorted the Israelis out.

In the West Bank's Gush Etzion settlement bloc south of Jerusalem, shots were fired from a Palestinian village at a guard post near an Israeli settlement on Thursday night, Israel Radio reported. No one was injured.

Settler leaders are in Washington to accompany the summit meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. They briefed one of Netanyahu's aides about the incident, and advised against handing more territory over to Arafat under the circumstances.

Hundreds of asylum seekers drown heading for Yemen

GENEVA (AFP) — Almost 250 Somali and Ethiopian asylum seekers are known to have drowned this year trying to reach Yemen, and the actual death toll could be much higher, the U.N. refugee agency said Friday.

Since the start of 1998, 247 would-be refugees voyaging to Yemen are reported to have died at sea, 27 of them in September and October, UNHCR Spokeswoman Judith Kumin said in Geneva.

"But there may have been many more casualties which have gone unrecorded," Kumin added, speaking for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Since January, 9,400 boat people, including Somalis and Ethiopians, have arrived in Yemen.

Those desperate to leave use boats piloted by armed smugglers who refuse to obey the orders of the Yemeni coast guard.

Passengers are frequently ordered by the boat pilots to disembark at sea, as the traffickers, who also tend to be arms smugglers, try to evade coast-guard patrols, resulting in an unknown number of drownings.

"Often there is an exchange of fire between the smuggler and the Yemeni coast guards, sometimes resulting in casualties," Kumin said.

The UNHCR was not clear why the refugee exodus to Yemen was continuing, she said.

A total of 65,000 Somali refugees living in Yemen. The UNHCR assists 10,000 of them at Al Gahin camp in the Aden region.

Yemen, Eritrea set up joint panel

SANAA (AFP) — Yemen and Eritrea, whose territorial dispute was settled by mediation a week ago, set up a joint cooperation committee Friday, the official Yemeni news agency SABA said.

The two countries' foreign ministers will co-chair the committee whose goal is to conclude bilateral agreements and encourage Yemeni and Eritrean officials to meet.

The committee was created during a visit to Yemen by a high-level Eritrean delegation.

Last Friday, an international arbitration panel awarded the principal islands of the disputed Hanish archipelago in the Red Sea to Yemen.

The Greater Hanish, Lesser Hanish and Jebel Zuqar islands control the access to the Bab Al Mandab strait between the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

Following the panel's decision, the two countries decided to normalise their relations.

Lebanon's new president hailed as reformer

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanon's president-elect General Emile Lahoud was hailed Friday as a man of reform expected to embark on wide-ranging political and economic change but who remains under the wing of powerful neighbour Syria.

"Lebanon will have a new president who, with little room for manoeuvre, will lead us into a new century," said an editorial in the English-language Daily Star newspaper.

"Tomorrow will be another day... the Lebanese have expressed a desire for a necessary change which has become equal to salvation," said another editorial in the leftist Al Safir daily.

Lahoud, the country's army chief, was unanimously elected by parliament Thursday and will be sworn in on Nov. 24 as the 10th post-independence president of Lebanon, the only Arab country with a Christian head of state.

Known as "Mr. Clean," Lahoud was named as successor to President Elias Hrawi during a hastily arranged summit in Damascus on Oct. 5 with Syrian President Hafez Al Assad who has openly dominated political life here since 1989.

The election of Lahoud, widely credited with reuniting the army after it splintered into Christian and Muslim militias during the 1975-1990 civil war, was greeted with widespread support across the political spectrum.

But the choice of a military man as head of state and his open selection by Syria sparked criticism among many Lebanese who fear for the country's democracy and freedom.

Since becoming army commander in 1989, Lahoud has shunned the spotlight and never given an interview. His trip to the presidential palace Thursday was the first time most of the Lebanese population had seen him in civilian clothes.

"All the Lebanese know about your goodwill, impartiality and objectivity having seen the good job you did to restore the army's unity," said the leading Al Nahar daily.

"But you should be careful about mixing up the administration and the army. One is governed by discipline and the other is full of corruption. It takes a lot of work... to rid the civil service of corrupt officials," it added.

However, Lahoud was quick to promise to "fulfil the aspirations of Lebanese for a state which respects the law, institutions and freedoms and is free of corruption."

He even warned that "reform starts from the top."

When Lahoud assumes his duties he will also be facing two heavyweights who wield even wider powers: Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and House Speaker Nabih Berri, whose rows have rocked Lebanon's political life for years.

The billionaire prime minister, who has often been criticised for his solitary practice of power, is expected to head his fourth government since 1992.

Lahoud will therefore have to work hard to install government ministers capable of reflecting his own views, one political analyst said.

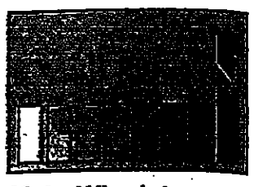
Economists were also sceptical about the impact Lahoud could have on Lebanon's battered economy beyond the short-term boost to morale provided by a smooth succession.

"The Lebanese pound is facing stronger demand although it was still under pressure days ago and Lebanese Eurobonds have appreciated significantly," said economist Freddie Baz.

Economists said Lahoud would need to find new sources of tax revenue and exert tighter control on public expenditure to tackle the burgeoning budget deficit.

They also urged him to move on privatisation to cap losses at state-owned firms.

Funding Lebanon's post-civil war rebuilding mainly through borrowing has sent the national debt soaring to $16 billion and the government is running a budget deficit of 22 per cent of gross national product.



Kate Winslet announces engagement

LONDON (AP) — "Titanic" star Kate Winslet plans to marry her boyfriend, aspiring film director Jim Theapleton, next year, the couple announced Friday. "When you know it's the right thing, you just know," Ms. Winslet said, posing for photographers outside the couple's north London home. "We want to get married sometime next summer, but we want to keep the details a secret." Ms. Winslet, 23, and Theapleton, 24, met last year on the set of the upcoming British film "Hideous Kinky," where he was working as an assistant director.

U.S. men prefer money to sex

CHICAGO (R) — Money or sex? U.S. men would take the cash, according to a poll released on Thursday by Playboy magazine. The publication said it surveyed 1,000 men aged 18 to 49 and found they had more fantasies about money than about sex. It also found that 61 per cent said having a family was the most important thing in their lives; that half would prefer more time off to a big pay raise; and half said owning a home was the No. 1 success symbol. When it came to sex, the survey found that age shaped choice. The magazine did not release the statistical breakdown on the money versus sex finding.

French men rush on Viagra

PARIS (R) — French men, who have always thought they could teach the world a thing or two about love, are expected to turn in their millions to the U.S. anti-impotency drug Viagra which went on sale around the country on Thursday. A recently released survey showed roughly 20 per cent of French men between the ages of 18 and 69 suffered from at least occasional impotence, suggesting potential rich pickings for Viagra's maker Pfizer Inc. News that the little blue pills had gone on sale in France received prominent coverage on early morning news shows and in the national press.

Ex-Spice Girl signs record deal

LONDON (AFP) — Four months after quitting the Spice Girls, Geri Halliwell has signed a solo record deal worth $3.4 million with Chrysalis Records, it was reported on Friday. The Sun tabloid said that Halliwell, known as "Ginger" when she was in the Spice Girls fivesome, has signed a deal for three albums which would be announced next week. The musician left the Spice Girls, who are signed up with Virgin Records, in June.

Uruguayan author wins Spanish literature prize

BARCELONA (AFP) — Uruguayan writer Carmen Posadas, 45, became the first Latin American woman to be awarded the prestigious Planeta Prize in a ceremony in Barcelona late Thursday. The most important prize for works in Spanish is worth $330,000. Posadas, author of half-a-dozen novels, short stories, screenplays for the cinema and television and musical comedies, was honoured for her latest novel, "Pequenias Infamias."